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The University of California Black Alumni Series

Archie F. Williams

THE JOY OF FLYING:
OLYMPIC GOLD, AIR FORCE COLONEL, AND TEACHER

With an Introduction by
J.R.K. Kantor

Interviews Conducted by
Gabrielle Morris
in 1992



Archie Williams, 1992, with gold medal.

Photograph by Gabrielle Morris

ARCHIE WILLIAMS

1915-1993

When Archie Williams '39 came to Berkeley from San Mateo Junior College, he had never run the quarter mile in under 49 seconds. In 1936, his first season on the Bear varsity, he won the Pacific Coast Conference and NCAA championships in 46.8 and 47 seconds, respectively. He then went on to win a gold medal in Berlin at the 1936 Olympics. Williams died on June 24 at 78, still tied for seventh on the all-time Cal list for the 400 (now 440) race. He was inducted into Cal's Hall of Fame in 1986.

"Running the 440, you don't have time to think, and you're trying not to get left behind," Williams said in a 1991 oral history. "Being on the winners' platform was a great feeling. The head of the Olympic Committee was some Frenchman who wanted to kiss you when he handed you the medal and a scroll. Get out of here!"

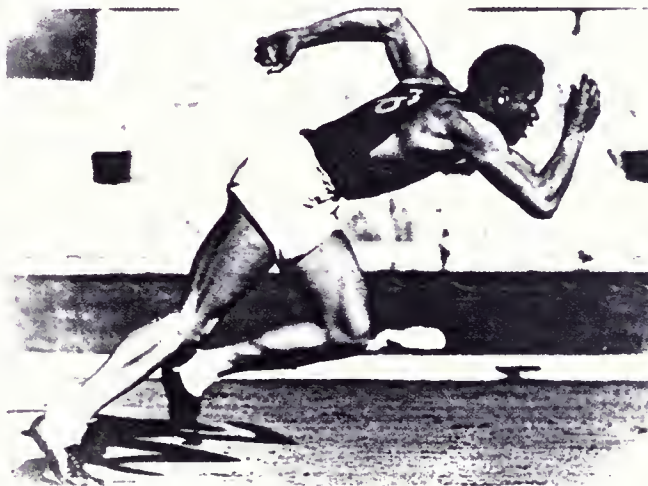
Williams's love of a challenge led him to obtain a pilot's license before graduating from Cal in mechanical engineering, and to suc-

ceed against daunting odds as a member of the 332d Fighter Group, the first black combat unit in the U.S. Air Corps in World War II.

In 1943, Williams went to Tuskegee as an instructor in the program to train black pilots. Some referred to the Tuskegee Airmen as the "Spookwaffe," and many expected the first trainees to fail. "A lot of white guys didn't want to fly with black pilots at first," Williams said. "But they found out our guys could shoot good and protect them." Williams went on to serve in the Air Defense Command and Strategic Air Command in Ohio, Alaska,

and California, retiring in 1966 as a lieutenant colonel. Williams completed a second career as a math teacher and coach at Drake High School in Marin and operated a flying service in Sonoma County. He is survived by his wife Vesta and his sons Archie Jr. and Carlos.

—Gabrielle Morris



Cal staffer Gabrielle Morris recorded Archie Williams' oral history for the Bancroft Library.

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a modern research technique involving an interviewee and an informed interviewer in spontaneous conversation. The taped record is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The resulting manuscript is typed in final form, indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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Introduction by J.R.K. Kantor, University of California, Berkeley, archivist emeritus.

Interviewed 1992 by Gabrielle Morris for the University of California Black Alumni Project. The Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Archie Williams, 1936 gold medal Olympian

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Archie Williams, a black runner whose gold medal performance at the 1936 Olympics helped foil Hitler's hopes of using the games to showcase "Aryan" athletes, died Thursday at age 78.

Mr. Williams, who was also a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel, suffered a heart attack at his Fairfax home.

He won the 400-meter race in 46.5 seconds at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, while teammate Jesse Owens captured much of the national spotlight by winning three individual gold medals.

In 1939, Mr. Williams graduated with a degree in mechanical

engineering from the University of California, Berkeley. But despite his degree, racial discrimination forced Mr. Williams to dig ditches briefly for the East Bay Municipal Utility District.

"I remember him telling me that he couldn't get a job when he finished his engineering degree," said Vesta Williams, his wife of 50 years. "It was racism. . . . They weren't hiring black engineers."

Mr. Williams subsequently pursued a pilot's license. For the next 22 years he trained pilots at the Tuskegee Institute and in the Army Air Corps, which he joined in 1942.

During his service, Mr. Williams studied meteorology at UCLA and aeronautical engineering at Wright Patterson Institute in Dayton, Ohio. He retired from the military a lieutenant colonel.

At age 55, Mr. Williams began teaching math and computer science at Sir Francis Drake High School in San Anselmo. In 1986, he retired from teaching and returned to flying as co-owner of Blue Sky Advertising.

In a 1981 interview with the Oakland Tribune, Mr. Williams talked about racism in the United States:

"As I recall, when I came back home . . . people asked me, 'How

did those dirty Nazis treat you?' To which I always replied, 'Well, over there at least we didn't have to ride in the back of the bus.'"

Mr. Williams recalled that Germans seemed unaccustomed to seeing blacks.

"I think they wanted to see if the black would come off if they rubbed our skin. . . . Jesse Owens might have been snubbed by Hitler, but he was a hero in the eyes of the Germans. They followed him around the streets like he was the Pied Piper."

Other survivors include his sons, Archie Williams Jr. and Carlos K. Williams.

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PREFACE

In America, education has long been an important avenue of opportunity. From our earliest years young people and their families have looked to the nation's colleges and universities to provide the knowledge and experience that will enable the new generation to take its place in the world of work and government and creative activity. In turn, one measure of the quality of American universities and colleges is the breadth and diversity of their students, including how well they reflect the mix of social, racial, and economic backgrounds that make up the communities from which they come and in which they will take part as graduates.

On the West Coast, the University of California at Berkeley has from its beginnings in the 1860s welcomed the sons and daughters of small farmers and shopkeepers, railroad workers and laborers, as well as the children of lawyers and doctors, corporate executives, from many ethnic and racial groups. By 1900, the first black students had enrolled at Berkeley, pioneers of yet another group of Americans eager to seek the best in higher education and to broaden their participation in the life of California and the nation.

Those first black students to come to Cal were indeed on their own, with few fellow black students and no special programs or black faculty to guide them or serve as role models. During the Great Depression of the 1930s a few more came, maybe a hundred at a time in all. The education benefits of the G.I. Bill for men and women who did military service during World War II opened the doors to many more black students to attend Cal in the late 1940s and early 1950s. A census taken in 1966 counted 226 black students, 1.02 percent of all the students at Berkeley. By the fall of 1988, there were 1,944 black graduate and undergraduate students, 6.1 percent of the student body. With changing population and immigration patterns in recent years, as well as active campus recruiting programs, for the first time there is not a single majority ethnic group in the entire undergraduate student body at Berkeley.

Looking back from the 1990s, those early trailblazers are very special. Though few in number, a large percentage of them have gone on to distinguished careers. They have made significant contributions in economics, education, medicine, government, community service, and other fields. It is fitting that a record of their initiative and energy be preserved in their own accounts of their expectations of the University of California, their experiences as students there, and how these experiences shaped their later lives. Their stories are a rich part of the history of the University.

Since 1970, the University has sought to gather information on this remarkable group of students, as noted in the following list of oral histories. In 1983, the UC Black Alumni Club and University officials began planning an organized project to document the lives and accomplishments of its black graduates. In order to provide scholars access to the widest possible array of data the present series includes oral histories conducted for Regional Oral History Office projects on California Government History Documentation and the History of Bay Area Philanthropy, funded by various donors.

With the advice and assistance of the Black Alumni Club, the Chancellor's Office, and the support of other alumni and friends of the University, the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library is tape-recording and publishing interviews with representative black alumni who attended Cal between the years 1920 and 1956. As a group, these oral histories contain research data not previously available about black pioneers in higher education. As individuals, their stories offer inspiration to young people who may now be thinking of entering the University.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1952 to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons significant in the history of California and the West. The Office is under the administrative direction of The Bancroft Library and Willa Baum, Division Head. Copies of all interviews in the series are available for research use in The Bancroft Library and UCLA Department of Special Collections. Selected interviews are also available at other manuscript depositories.

Gabrielle Morris, Director
University of California Black Alumni Project

Willa K. Baum, Division Head
Regional Oral History Office

May 1992
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BLACK ALUMNI SERIES

Interviews completed or in process as of November 1992

Allen Broussard, On the California Courts, in process.

Lloyd Noel Ferguson, Increasing Opportunities in Chemistry, 1936-1986, 1992.

Walter Gordon, Athlete, Officer in Law Enforcement and Administration, Governor of the Virgin Islands, 1980.*

Ida Jackson, Overcoming Barriers in Education, 1990.

John Miller, "Issues of Criminal Justice and Black Politics in California," in Legislative Issue Management and Advocacy, 1961-1974, 1983.*

Charles Patterson, On Oakland Economic Development and Philanthropy, in process.*

Tarea Hall Pittman, NAACP Official and Civil Rights Worker, 1974.*

Marvin Poston, Making Opportunities in Vision Care, 1989.

Emmett J. Rice, Education of an Economist: From Fulbright Scholar to the Federal Reserve Board, 1951-1979, 1991.

William Byron Rumford, Legislator for Fair Employment, Fair Housing, and Public Health, 1973.*

Archie Williams, The Joy of Flying: Olympic Gold, Air Force Colonel, and Teacher, 1993.

Lionel Wilson, Attorney, Judge, and Oakland Mayor, 1992.

*Interviews conducted for other Regional Oral History Office projects, funded by various donors.

INTRODUCTION--by J.R.K. Kantor

When it came time to select the first group of eighteen honorees to be inducted into the newly-established University of California Athletic Hall of Fame in 1986, there was no question but that Archie Williams of the Class of 1939 would be chosen; chosen to represent the cream of Cal's athletic accomplishments along with fellow-luminaries "Andy" Smith (football coach of the Wonder Teams of the 1920s), crew coach "Ky" Ebright (three of whose crews won Gold Medals in the '28, '32, and '48 Olympic Games), baseball coach Clint Evans, track coach (and Williams' mentor) Brutus Hamilton, and student athletes Walter Gordon, Stan Barnes, "Brick" Muller, and Jackie Jensen.

The Hall of Fame itself had long been the dream of Henry Waring, Class of 1931, and long-time business manager of the University Extension, and I recall many happy luncheon meetings with Hank at the Hotel Durant, beginning in the mid-1970's, during which we discussed the "how" and "where" of setting up such a facility, in which Cal's athletic trophies and successes in various intercollegiate sports might be exhibited. It was only in 1981 that the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, having completed a successful five million dollar fund-raising campaign under the spirited leadership of Margot Monteverde Smith, was able to plan for the development of hitherto-unused space on the western side of California Memorial Stadium, and the Hall of Fame was opened to an enthusiastic public in 1983.

On the mezzanine of the Hall of Fame is the Honorees' Gallery, and in one of the glass-fronted exhibition cases one finds the tribute to Archie Williams--

Archie Williams '39 came to Berkeley from San Mateo Junior College, having never run the quarter-mile under 49 seconds. In 1936, his first season on the Bear Varsity, he won the Pacific Coast Conference and NCAA Championships, in the times of 46.8 and 47.0 respectively. In a preliminary heat at the NCAA he set a world record in a time of 46.1. He then went on to win the Gold Medal in the 400 meters at the Olympic Games in Berlin in a time of 46.5.

Early in the season of 1937 a serious leg injury cut short his outstanding career. Even after fifty years he still stands tied for seventh on the all-time Cal list for the 400 (440).

At the initial induction ceremony on Saturday morning, Eighteenth October 1986, I met Archie Williams and shall never forget shaking his hand and wishing him well. Fifty summers earlier I had been a lad of eight, summering with my family on the north shore of Long Island Sound. I doubt that I was very excited by the fact of the Olympic Games, taking place in far-away Germany--there was no telly in those days, and one spent one's summer out of doors and hardly glued to a radio. But what Williams had achieved became legend in Cal's logbook and when I became University Archivist in 1964 I quickly learned about this man. And I could see why he would be held in such admiration along with those men whose names I have enumerated above. A moment or two conversation with Archie Williams that morning could not but whet my appetite to read the transcript of the oral history which Gabrielle Morris helped to bring into being.

Now, just imagine yourself recalling an event of fifty-six years ago. Would you be able to put it so elegantly as this:

I was happy. It was like a dream. You were dreaming you were in something that you thought about before. What am I doing here? Is this me? In fact, when it was over and I came back, did that really happen? Did I really do that? That kind of stuff. I think most people feel that same way, especially because I came like you say--. One year I was nothing, the next year I was in this.

Like many institutions of higher learning established in the United States following the bloody Civil War of 1861-1865, the University of California heralded an optimistic program for the education of young people, men and women. Along with Classical Studies, Mechanical Studies, Agricultural Studies, the students found themselves engaging in athletic competition--the first organized activity at Berkeley was rowing, and the first UC Boathouse was built on the Oakland Estuary in 1875. But it was track which, in 1895, proclaimed Berkeley's arrival in intercollegiate sports, for the squad that year travelled East and won against Princeton, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. Along with their silk shorts and spike shoes the men carried two banners, of blue silk, on which were emblazoned in golden thread a California bear--thus, the origins of the California Golden Bears! And it was to the legendary glory of '95 that Archie Williams added so nobly in 1936 with his Olympic Gold Medal.

At the conclusion of this memoir, Gaby Morris asks Archie Williams: "Any tips for the younger generation? What would you tell them?" and receives the reply: "Take long steps and save shoe leather." Surely a pithy echo of Robert Browning's offering that a man's reach should exceed his grasp, and in this case Archie Williams did reach for and pick off a little bit of Heaven in his own lifetime.

J. R. K. Kantor

October 1992
Berkeley, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY--Archie Franklin Williams

Archie Williams was interviewed by the Regional Oral History Office on February 11, 1992 at his home high on the shoulder of Mount Tamalpais. Although named for his grandfather, Army Sergeant Archy Wall, Archie is the spelling of Mr. William's name on his birth certificate. Mr. William's narrative describes the training and experience in track that enabled him to win a gold medal at the 1936 Olympics as a University of California, Berkeley, sophomore and how that training and determination carried on through his pioneering career in the Tuskegee Airmen and United States Air Force and, later, in teaching and coaching high school students in Marin County.

Mr. Williams is a wiry person of medium height, with graying curly hair and a welcoming grin, wearing a runner's sweat suit. In spite of a touch of arthritis, he climbs steep stairs to usher a guest to his home and settles back to recall well-polished memories. With numerous colorful anecdotes, he provides a lively picture of growing up in Oakland, California in the twenties: building model airplanes and boats, swimming in San Francisco Bay, playing with the youngsters being cared for in the children's home his grandmother organized, being shut out of the Boy Scouts, minding his manners when the ladies who founded the National Council of Negro Women were in town.

As an unknown junior college transfer at Cal, he soon came to the attention of legendary coach Brutus Hamilton who not only recognized Archie's track potential but also kept a close eye on his protege's academic progress. Archie's progress to the Olympics seems almost effortless in the telling, and his account of the Berlin games against the background of Nazi officials at the stadium and racial insensitivity in the American press is powerful.

Next the reader follows Archie after graduation from the University as he learns to fly and wins an instructor's credential, going on to teach cadets at Tuskegee Institute during World War II. In spite of discrimination against this famed all-black fighter unit, which the establishment expected to fail, Williams stayed on in the integrated air force for a twenty-year postwar hitch and kept his sense of humor. He retired as a lieutenant colonel and returned to California, where he continued to teach as a civilian and with his wife, Vesta, operated a flying service until recently.

Mr. Williams reviewed the rough-edited transcript of the interview and pronounced it pretty much accurate. A few names and other details were verified in a follow-up meeting in October 1992. Several articles from the *Oakland Tribune* July-August 1936 sports section coverage of the Olympics and Archie's triumph are included in the appendix. The introduction to this interview by University Archivist emeritus J.R.K. Kantor gives a sense of the esteem in which Archie is held by his alma mater.

On June 26, 1993, Archie died in Fairfax. Air Force comrades and friends from around the country, as well as former high school students of his, joined in a memorial celebration of his life at which his son, Archie Williams, Jr., played the music of Duke Ellington.

Gabrielle Morris
Interviewer-Editor

July 1993
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Archie Franklin Williams

Date of birth May 1, 1915 Birthplace Oakland, California

Father's full name Wadsworth Williams

Occupation Real Estate Birthplace Evanston, Illinois

Mother's full name Lillian Wall Williams

Occupation none Birthplace Silver City, New Mexico

Your spouse Vesta Young Williams

Occupation educator Birthplace Cairo, Illinois

Your children Archie Williams, Jr.; Carlos Williams

Where did you grow up? Oakland and Berkeley, California

Present community Fairfax (Marin County)

Education B.S in Mechanical Engineering, University of California, Berkeley

Occupation(s) Retired officer U.S.A.F. (Lt. Col.)

Retired high school teacher (mathematics)

Areas of expertise _____

Other interests or activities _____

Organizations in which you are active _____

I GROWING UP IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

[Interview 1: February 11, 1992]##¹

Thoughts on Olympic Athletes

[Preliminary conversation about 1992 Winter Olympics]

Williams: I'd like to see the selection process set up to allow the best basketball players. It's supposed to be amateur sports. The American teams would be made up of the leading professional athletes in basketball, not some kid from Modesto Junior College. He can't make the team. He can't even get close to it. The whole team is going to be pro. These guys who get a half million dollars or more a year. These are the guys who are going to represent us in the basketball.

Morris: Is that beginning this year? They've made some changes in the rules?

Williams: No, they've been changing the rules all along. But the rules they are changing--. I don't know who decides that you cannot permit professional athletes to be in the Olympics. In fact, when I was competing, they couldn't even give me a Hershey bar or carfare home. I had to walk home from school, walk home from the track meet.

Actually, as far as I am concerned, the whole thing's a big show. Everything that they do is a show. Of course, I'm not bitter. I'm proud of the guys who are doing their thing but I know it is not the type of thing--. I don't think it would motivate the kids nowadays, that is, to go through what you have to go through to be there. But anyway, that's my own view of it.

¹This symbol (##) indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page following transcript.

Morris: That sounds kind of like what Brutus Hamilton was saying twenty years ago.¹

Williams: Say, Brutus Hamilton fifty years ago. He was my coach.

Morris: Right.

Williams: In fact, he influenced my whole life. This big change thing happened about thirty years ago, changing you might say the rules for athletes. These college guys, I talked to a guy from Texas. He said he lost money when he turned pro. [laughter] He was a college football player. He was making more money as an amateur than as a pro!

Morris: Oh, that's too bad.

Williams: Oh, yes, it was a shame. In fact, when they graduate, they can't even read their diploma. That's how bad it is. Some of them are very illiterate. That's a shame.

Morris: That's too bad when you think of what college is supposed to be for.

Williams: Exactly. How did they get into college?

Morris: Yes. Well, that's kind of what I came over to talk to you about today, how it used to be. This large bunch of paper here is copies of clippings about you from the Oakland Tribune for July and August of 1936.

Williams: Hmm. I used to sell the Tribune. I had a paper route.

Morris: Really?

Williams: Sure.

Family Scrapbook

Morris: That's a great way to get young fellows started in the business world. I made a list of things I'd like to ask you. Would you

¹See Brutus Hamilton, Student Athletics and the Voluntary Discipline, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1967.

like to take a minute and take a look and see what I had in mind?

Williams: Sure. Okay. Fine.

Morris: This is your story so you can say, "I don't want to talk about that but I would like to talk about this."

Williams: [Reviewing notes] I didn't go to Oakland Tech. Tech was one of our rivals. I went to University High. That doesn't matter; I'm just pointing that out. Cal was 1935 to 1939.

Morris: Okay.

Williams: Here. I went to Peralta School on North Street. Actually it's a little short street right off of Telegraph.

Morris: There is still a Peralta School.

Williams: Sure there is. I go by there every now and then to my high school.

Morris: It's at 63rd Street in the phone book.

Williams: Maybe so. Let me show you this scrapbook.

My auntie [Florence Murray] and my mom [Lillian] and my grandmom [Fannie Franklin Wall] put this together. There you go.

Morris: There you are. "Peralta School, Oakland, 1926." What a nice bunch of fellows.

Williams: This is the sixth grade graduating class. Let's see if I remember. Mrs. Bradley, the principal. Annie, she was the sweetie of the class. Bobby Earhart, Irving Mahoney, Jack Martin, Eldon Lucy, Al Conquest. I forget this guy's name. I remember those guys. They were the kids I grew up with. I was twelve years old.

Morris: That's neat. There you guys all are with your ties and jackets on.

Williams: There's Kenny Bradshaw. This is Dick Kruger, Jack Mayer, Robbie Chapman. I wonder where these guys are now. I know some of them are probably dead. These were the good old days.

Morris: I talked to Ken Bradshaw yesterday and he said to give you his regards.

Williams: Right now, I can go right to the house where he used to live. Near Telegraph and Alcatraz, a little short street in there. Kenny was in the forestry department, I think. We went to this school, we went to Claremont Junior High, we went to Uni [University] High School and we went to Cal together.

Morris: He said it took him a year longer than it took you to get through Cal.

Williams: No, it probably took me longer because I spent a year messing around with this track and then finally the Olympics.

Morris: That will do it.

Williams: There's a picture of my sailboat. We used to make little sailboats and take them down to Lake Merritt and sail around.

Morris: Those are beautiful. So here's a guy, sort of a one-man sailor.

Williams: That's me!

Morris: That's you out there?

Williams: That's right.

Morris: That's great. And you built that sailboat yourself?

Williams: Yes. We built it in our backyard.

Morris: Was it part of a school project or was it just for fun?

Williams: Popular Science had some plans and this kid up the street said, "Let's make one." We went down to one of those guys who had a bunch of boards and built it in my back yard.

Morris: That's wonderful.

Williams: Just kid stuff. In those days there used to be motorboat races on Lake Merritt on the Fourth of July. We'd be down there in our little boat and we'd tip over on purpose so we could swim. Once I saw an Aeronica float plane land on the lake, back in the thirties. We used to go fishing on the other side of 14th Street where the lake goes into the estuary.

Grandparents Archy and Fannie Wall

Morris: You're Archie as a boy in this scrapbook. What does it say on your birth certificate?

Williams: Archie. This "Archibald" business, I don't know where the hell that came from. My grandfather's name was Archie. In fact, he spelled his A-R-C-H-Y. On my birth certificate, it's A-R-C-H-I-E. Archibald sounds stilted. It kind of sounds like a British movie. [laughter] Archie Bunker, how's that?

Morris: [laughter] How did your family come to settle in Oakland?

Williams: My grandfather was in the army and was last stationed in the Presidio [San Francisco]. When he got out of the army, they moved to Oakland.

Morris: World War I?

Williams: No. He was in the Spanish-American War, and my mother was an army brat. In fact, my mother was born in a New Mexico fort, Fort Huachuca or some place like that. Actually, I think it was Silver City, New Mexico. They lived in the Presidio. My grandfather is buried in the Presidio now. That's how we ended up here. That's my mother's side. She married my father, Wadsworth Williams. He was from Oakland. That's how we got started. But anyway, my grandfather ended up living here in Oakland actually. And I was born here on May 1, 1915.

Morris: When he retired?

Williams: Yes. I don't know all the history of that because I was a little brat then. This is what I was told. In fact, I could right now go to the house on 60th Street where they lived back almost eighty years ago, or ninety years ago. The house we used to live in, my grandfather's house on Telegraph Avenue, they've torn it down. I could stand on the front porch, look right up Telegraph and look at the Campanile when I was kid.

Morris: That's great. Were there open fields between your house and the University of California campus?

Williams: No. It was kind of like it is now. There were a lot of vacant lots. But from Alcatraz all the way up to Bancroft, it was just like it is now. Of course, back in those days, it was like any place else; there weren't too many houses.

Morris: This is your grandfather Archy--

Williams: Right, Archy Wall.

Morris: The grandmother in this album is--.

Williams: Fannie Wall. That's his wife, my grandmother.

Morris: Was your grandfather a sergeant? A master sergeant?

Williams: He was a sergeant. I don't know what kind. Just sergeant. Everybody said, "Sergeant Wall." In fact, there is an American Legion Post in San Francisco named for him. I've been told that.

Morris: Where did your grandmother come from?

Williams: She's from Tennessee. That part of our history I don't know too much. I don't know where they met or anything. I've asked my Aunt Florence Murray but she didn't know any details. Oh. My middle name is Franklin; my grandmother was a Franklin. Ever hear of Aretha Franklin?

Morris: I have. The singer.

Williams: She's one of our distant relatives. I have a cousin whose name is Franklin and she said, "Yes, that Aretha is our cousin."

Morris: Kissing cousins?

Williams: Kissing cousins. Something like that.

Child Welfare: Negro Women's Groups

Morris: I've also heard of the Fannie Wall Children's Home.

Williams: Yes. She had a children's home down there in Oakland. Let's see. I think it started out on Peralta but I think it ended up on Linden Street. It was a day nursery.

Morris: Like child care?

Williams: Right. Like a child-care center.

Morris: Was it also for orphans?

Williams: Actually, I know a lot of the kids were from broken homes, stuff like that. That sort of a thing. In fact, she was very civic-minded in things like that, and they named it after her.

Morris: Was she a church lady?

Williams: Not too much. In those days, everybody was sort of. We went to church. I went to Sunday School a lot. You would play marbles in the back yard of the church, or things like that.

She was a good friend of Mrs. Bethune. Have you heard of Mary McLeod Bethune?

Morris: Right.

Williams: Mrs. Bethune stayed with us, the year when I busted my arm, 1928 or something like that.

Morris: And Mrs. Bethune came and helped with your broken arm?

Williams: No. She was here when they had the women's conference. What the heck was it? Club ladies. They have a national organization.

Morris: National Council of Negro Women is what it is now.

Williams: You've got it.

Morris: It was something else before that.

Williams: They had some name. I don't know what the hell it was. I had to get out when they were eating ice cream, Mrs. Bethune and all the women in that particular meeting.

Morris: Mrs. Bethune travelled around a lot organizing the ladies?

Williams: I guess so. She was out here for this national--the national, they called it. I think it had something to do with NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. I remember Crisis was the first magazine I ever read. It was put out by the NAACP; it used to have pictures of lynchings.

Mrs. Bethune and my grandmother were very good friends. She used to stay with us when she was out here. They used to have a lot of serious talks. They were both very civic-minded, activist ladies. They didn't believe in confrontations, but there were a lot of orphans, lots of kids not being taken care of and they saw to it that something was done for them.

These women's clubs raised the money for the children's home and Fannie would go around to these different organizations and ask for money. They'd give services too and help fix up the buildings. There were a lot of people involved up and down the state, in Los Angeles and Bakersfield; but it was mostly known in the Bay Area. I think there may have been a home in San Francisco, but the main place where these ladies took care of kids was here in Oakland.

Father, Brother, and Sister

Morris: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Williams: I have a sister. My brother died last year.

Morris: Oh, dear.

Williams: My sister lives in Pasadena. They were a year apart. She is a year younger than I am and my brother was two years younger than I am.

Morris: And your sister's name?

Williams: Florence. And my brother's name was William.

Morris: William Williams.

Williams: William Williams, right.

Morris: That's kind of a mouthful.

Williams: Yes it is. His nickname was Fritz. He was born during World War I and they said he looked like a little German. So they nicknamed him Fritz. I had a kookie uncle who named him that. That's what they say, one of those stories.

Morris: Yes. Was your dad also from Oakland?

Williams: No. My dad was from Chicago. He had a grocery store at 20th and Telegraph, catercorner from Capwell's furniture store [now Emporium department store], and he bought real estate. He died when I was kind of young.

Morris: That's too bad. Had he come out here to work?

Williams: Yes, he was out here working. He was working in the U.S. Mint. In fact, that was the closest we ever came to--.

Morris: Being rich? [laughter]

Williams: He was the elevator man. [It was] full of gold and it fell out and smashed him. Didn't kill him or nothing.

Morris: Oh, my Lord.

Williams: He said it kind of cracked his skull or something. In those days there were a lot of accidents like that. I don't know how true it is.

We lived in Oakland. Before I was born, my father was on a ship, some kind of a ship going up and down the coast. The ship had a shipwreck. He ended up hanging onto a log out in the ocean. Another ship came by. The guys on there said, "Hey, boy. What the hell you doing out here in the middle of the ocean?" They fished him out.

Morris: Sounds as if he had quite a lot of adventures. Did you get to know him at all?

Williams: No. I was about ten years old when he died. In those days, a lot of people died young. I think he died from or had pneumonia. In those days, they had a lot of these horrible things. They used to have diphtheria, they had scarlet fever, they had flu. Geez, they had everybody wearing masks. They used to quarantine houses, put a big red sign on the house. I wouldn't walk on that side of the street when I was walking home from school. That's how you were scared. Of course, you should be scared. In those days, there were things like that. They didn't have all this vaccine, stuff like that, as they do now. Kind of a rough time.

Values and Discipline

Morris: I should say. Did you get involved in any of your grandmother's civic activities?

Williams: No. I was just a kid.

Morris: Pass the cookies?

Williams: I would be around there sometimes. I would go down to the home and play with the kids. I wasn't doing it for anything noble. It was being with the kids. I would go down and play with them. Some of the kids, as I said, were orphans or kids from broken homes. It wasn't strictly charity but they got a lot of good help from the community. For instance, there used to be a club in Oakland. Have you ever heard of the Athens Athletic Club?

Morris: Yes.

Williams: Okay. That used to be down there in the middle of Oakland. I remember that--.

Morris: It's now on Telegraph too.

Williams: Actually, at that time it was down around 10th and Washington. It was kind of like the Olympic Club in San Francisco. It was strictly an upper-class businessmen's sports club. They would donate a lot of food and stuff from the kitchen. In fact, a lot of guys I knew worked there as waiters. It was nice.

My grandmother liked to rattle the cages of some of the politicians to get them to help out.

Morris: [laughs] Did she? Did she have any trouble getting to see the mayor?

Williams: Oh, no. John L. Davies, he was the mayor. He always wore a pretty, red carnation. She was pretty outspoken though. That was the day when she was the matriarch. She knew what was right and wrong and she let you know.

Morris: Did she have some strong ideas about how you and your brother and sister ought to behave?

Williams: Yes. Matter of fact, so did my grandfather, everybody. In those days, any old person. For instance, if you got a spanking in school, you got a spanking on the way home. Your mom spanked you, your auntie spanked you. That kind of stuff. Everybody would discipline.

Morris: If you were bad, you would get punished again when you got home?

Williams: You know it. You would get shaped up. I don't say that that's the way to do it, but that's the way it was done in those days. In fact, they didn't have much trouble from the kids at all.

Morris: According to one of these press clippings that I found, your mom was working in San Francisco?

Williams: That's right. She cooked for some lady in San Francisco. She did that kind of work while I was in college.

Morris: So she would be around on weekends?

Williams: Sure. That's right.

Morris: Your mom's name?

Williams: Lillian.

Morris: You wonder if she had to mind what her mom said, too?

Williams: That's right. Anybody who knew what the score was. In other words, there wasn't any hassle in the family. Everybody got along fine. It's the way it is in a big family, and family values meant a lot. We didn't have any hassles within the family. Everybody participated. For instance, if we kids got jobs, if we made any money--I cut lawns, shined shoes, sold papers--"Here, Mom, here's the money." This kind of stuff. We had what we needed, if we needed show money or candy money or we needed a pair of shoes. Everybody pitched in and helped. This was during the Depression, the late twenties and early thirties. I was a product of the Depression.

Depression Times; Race Relations

Morris: Was that North Oakland neighborhood pretty prosperous? Did most people get through the Depression without losing jobs?

Williams: In those days, everybody survived. Nobody had anything. It was equal opportunity. Everybody was broke. You ate a lot of beans and stuff like that. I never missed a meal and I never went to school with holes in my shoes. It was nothing like The Grapes of Wrath. Everybody was kind of poor. Sure, some people were kind of well-off and we kind of envied them but, hell, that's the way it is.

Everybody was in the same boat. My friend George, his father was in electricity. Another guy's dad was a butcher. Al Hobsworth, his dad was a butcher. Norman Wagner's dad was a butcher. Nielson was a grocer. Stuff like that. Just ordinary middle America.

Morris: They lived in the neighborhood and their shops were right there?

Williams: Right nearby. Right. I grew up just like everybody else. In that part of Oakland where I lived, there weren't too many black families. When I went to Peralta you didn't see any black kids in my class. There was another school by the name of Washington School. Do you know where Washington School is?

Morris: Yes.

Williams: I went to Washington also. Actually, Peralta was just finished when I started going there. They built Peralta because Washington wasn't big enough for everything. In fact, my mom went to Washington school when she was little.

That's right. The same principal, Mr. Hudspeth. How the hell did I remember that? Anyway, all of my friends were white. Except for George Suzuki, a Japanese kid who lived not too far from us. Suzuki, that's as common a name as Smith in Japan. Most of the Japanese kids I went to high school with went to relocation camps during World War II. Hell, they were as American as I was; that was a dirty deal. In Los Angeles, a lot of Koreans were sent to camp too. The rumor was that they were spies for the Japanese.

There were also some Japanese fellows who went to Cal when I did. Some of them took ROTC. When they all lined up for roll call, the names sounded kind of strange.

I knew I was black but I never was reminded of it. In other words, we were friends. We would go to each other's house, eat supper at each other's house. Stuff like that.

Morris: Kids didn't lean on you?

Williams: Oh, no. I had a few fights. All the kids had fights. In fact, one thing. They had a Boy Scout troop. Some of my friends said, "I always wanted to go to Boy Scouts." I said, "I don't know. What the hell is that?" They took me down there and the guy told me I couldn't be one.

Morris: Really?

Williams: I said, "Okay. It doesn't matter." I was used to it. In other words, I knew that there were things like that going on. I didn't like it but that was the way it was.

Morris: What about your grandmother? Did she take up that cry?

Williams: She didn't even know that I tried to do this or not. At that time, to me it wasn't a big thing anyway. Some of my friends, some of the people, went out, went camping, went fishing. I was doing that myself, what the hell.

Morris: At Lake Merritt in town?

Williams: We had the Berkeley Pier. We would go down there and go fishing. There were sharks in that water. When we got through, we would take our clothes off, jump in and start swimming.

Morris: Up along the shore? Or did you jump off the pier?

Williams: Off the pier. We would go fishing out there. You would catch the Number 5 street car; it was the Telegraph Avenue car. The line ended up at University and where the old railroad station is.

Morris: There was not a freeway there? Just San Pablo Avenue?

Williams: No [freeway]. That's right.

Morris: There was San Pablo Avenue, then the railroad station and then the waterfront?

Williams: That's right. In fact, Aquatic Park was built on fill. That little jetty, that's what used to be the auto ferry, the Berkeley Ferry.

Morris: Right. Didn't you worry about jumping in the water with the ferries going in and out?

Williams: No. The ferries were at the end. We didn't go all the way to the end. We went part of the way out and would hang our clothes on a nail and jump into the water.

Morris: Skinnydipping.

Williams: That's right. It was great.

Morris: The water was clean enough to swim in?

Williams: That's right. That's another thing about this swimming thing. For instance, have you ever heard of a place that's called Neptune Beach?

Morris: I sure have. Down in Alameda.

Williams: Forget it; [it's gone.] How about Idora Park?

Morris: It's on Grove Street.

Williams: Actually it was between Telegraph and Shattuck, around 57th and Telegraph. It was an amusement park and they had a lot of rides and stuff. They had a big swimming pool. Forget it.

Morris: When did that disappear?

Williams: A little before 1940. Just before the war. They tore it down. It was just a big lake. They put in houses.

Morris: It fell apart?

Williams: Sort of. It got decrepit. It was gone. There was a big church right on the corner there.

Morris: There is still a locksmith shop called Idora Park.

Williams: Right. Idora Park Keys on Shattuck. That's right.

We used to go down there on Easter vacation, before the thing opened. They would be trying out these big [makes a whooshing sound]. My brother would go down there and take a ride.

Morris: Roller coasters?

Williams: Roller coasters.

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Williams: And, you know, these games. You throw a ball. As I say, you could go there but you couldn't go swimming.

Morris: Because the water was getting bad?

Williams: No. Because your skin was the wrong color.

Morris: I see. They wouldn't let you swim.

Williams: That's right. They had a sign. No black people, or something like that.

Morris: Really. That must have been a shock for people coming from the South. They were told that things were better out here.

Williams: Well, in those kinds of things they were not too serious. For instance, I could go into any theater or even a restaurant.

They would at least have signs, "We reserve the right to refuse service," that kind of crap. In fact, we never encountered anything like that, around here anyway.

II YOUTH SPORTS

Playground Meets

Morris: So when did you get interested in organized sports, like baseball and track?

Williams: Well, as a kid, we all played I guess you call it sandlot ball, basketball, volleyball. Sometimes they would have what they call field day. They would have a little track meet. Have you ever heard of a place called Bushrod Park?

Morris: Yes.

Williams: I lived about two blocks from Bushrod. We would go down there and we used to race around the track. Just fun. Just for fun. Although sometimes when we were small, they used to have track meets and games there. We would go there and watch the big guys. You would see it and then say, "I want to try that."

Morris: School meets and things like that?

Williams: Yes, a little bit at school. This and that. Play day. The girls had a stupid thing. Have you ever heard of a Maypole?

Morris: Yes.

Williams: It's a pole. It had to have ribbons. They would walk around, weave the ribbons around the pole. The girls did that. The boys threw baseballs, had a fifty-yard dash, broadjump and stuff like that.

Morris: And sports at school?

Williams: It's kind of nice at elementary schools because that's the closest thing to organized sports. We didn't play against anybody, just against each other. Later on, when we got to

junior high, sometimes we went against different junior highs. But it was really low-key stuff. We didn't have uniforms. We would just go out and play and have fun. This was the way it was supposed to be.

In fact, I lived in Berkeley about three or four years. My mom got married again and we moved again. I went to Edison Junior High. Do you know Edison?

Morris: Yes. I always heard it was closed soon after it was built because it wasn't earthquake-proof. You must be one of the few people who went to Edison.

Williams: I went with a lot of people. Edison was a hell of a nice school. They had a print shop that did printing for the school, and wood shop and metal shop. They had a real forge in metal shop--you could make a horseshoe if you wanted to. We had a Model T Ford there--one of the old ones that didn't have an electric generator in it. It had a magneto that you had to crank to get a spark to start it. [chuckles] One time we hooked it up to the teacher when he wasn't looking. We really had him hopping.

We had a gym, a junior high school with a regular gym. We used to play against Garfield and Burbank. Those were the other two junior high schools.

Morris: That was an organized program with a coach?

Williams: There was no head coach. Wait a minute. Did they have track? I don't know. I remember, I went to Claremont and I think they had track. But the playground was like blacktop. It was just like a parking lot. They painted some stripes for the fifty-yard dash. It was real low-key sports like that.

Then when I finished junior high, I started University High School. You know where that is, on Grove Street. They call it Martin Luther King now.

High School Leagues

Morris: It's the big place that's closed now.

Williams: It breaks my heart to go by there because it was a beautiful school. They had it well landscaped. In fact, most of the student teachers at Cal in the Ed [Education] Department did

their student teaching at Uni. Many people who lived in Berkeley sent their kids to Uni, had inter-district transfer. They lived in Berkeley but they sent the kids to Uni for school, because half the kids who were in Uni were from Berkeley. In fact, I met kids I never knew before.

That's where I got interested in track. I ran track there. I didn't do too well. I made it onto a relay team. I was more often one of the guys off the track.

Morris: So there were lots of teachers and teacher trainees for the number of students.

Williams: Oh, sure.

Morris: That must have been nice.

Williams: It was really nice. Uni was a real good school. Berkeley High was the big school. It's not as big now. I think it was the biggest school in the Oakland-Berkeley area.

Morris: Were they the big rivals for Uni?

Williams: We used to go against them but nobody was a rival with them because they were bad ass.

Morris: Really? Do tell. What was bad about the Berkeley kids?

Williams: They were just good players.

Morris: Oh. So they were tough to beat.

Williams: Because it was a big school. Do you remember Billy Martin, the baseball player?

Morris: Yes.

Williams: He was from Berkeley High. Let's see. Who else? There were quite a few guys who went there who were pretty famous.

Morris: Did they have a league the way they do now when they play another team?

Williams: That's actually what they had in those days. God, it's bringing back all--. They had OAL. Oakland Athletic League. Uni, Oakland High, Tech, Fremont, Castlemont, Roosevelt. Even San Leandro was with OAL.

Morris: Really?

- Williams: Yes. San Leandro was part of Oakland then. Then Berkeley was in the ACL--Alameda County [League]. Berkeley, Richmond, Alameda, who else?
- Morris: El Cerrito?
- Williams: No. They didn't have a high school then. Everybody in El Cerrito went to Berkeley High. El Cerrito in those days was part of Berkeley, sort of.
- Morris: Sort of unincorporated?
- Williams: Unincorporated. Right. Same thing with Albany. But the ACL was Richmond--.
- Morris: Contra Costa.
- Williams: No. They weren't in it either. It was Alameda County. Richmond, Hayward, Alameda and Berkeley.
- Morris: That sort of sounds as if they were going around Oakland.
- Williams: Oakland Athletic League, and the rest of it was Alameda County. That's how it worked.
- Morris: How weird. Oakland sits right there in the middle.
- Williams: I know. Anyway, Oakland had its own league. These other guys, since they were not part of Oakland, they had to find somebody who was not part of Oakland.
- Morris: Right. They've got to compete.
- Williams: Right. They got Alameda; they got anybody else. In those days, it was easy. It was pretty simple. Richmond. Hell, that was miles away. And Alameda was little, of course.
- Morris: And Richmond was a pretty small town.
- Williams: Oh, really small. Alameda was a little dinky place. They would say, "You roll up the streets there at night. They don't have a curfew; that could wake everybody up." Hayward was the same way. That was really the country.
- Morris: Right. So you ran kind of for fun.
- Williams: Oh, sure. They had league meets. I ran on the relay team.

Morris: In 1932, this little clipping said, "One of the most breathtaking cinder pounders turned out to be in the quarter mile." There is a picture.

Williams: Yes. Ken Sibley came through. Third place I think. Bob Heaby[?], he's the guy.

Morris: Oh, there's Archie.

Williams: Yes, that's right. I kicked their ass. This was the first meet. This was at Hayward. These guys, I beat them all.

Morris: In the quarter mile?

Williams: "The fifth heat was taken by Hemingway." Hemingway. He lives down in Corte Madera. And Bob Gamble, he was the halfback on the football team. "Archie Williams: a new quarter-miler." For the date, I had the best time.

Morris: That's great.

Williams: That was probably the first time I got my name in the paper. Something like that.

Morris: A new quarter-miler. Good for you.

Williams: I don't know where they got that paper. I know where that was. That was in a paper called the New Age Dispatch.

Morris: Okay.

Preparing for Cal at San Mateo Junior College

Williams: When I finished high school, I went to junior college. I went to San Mateo J.C. [Junior College]. That picture right there [shows picture]; that is my relay team at the San Mateo J.C.

Morris: You're the tallest. Is that you on the end, the tallest one of the group?

Williams: That's right. Harry Seligman and, let's see, who else? I went down. I kind of fooled around a lot in high school. I didn't have very good grades. We were out of school for a year or so. A friend of mine, we were caddying at the golf course. We were not making any money. We were just goofing off. He said, "Let's go back to school." A fellow named Harry Osborne. I

said, "Go back to school? What the hell are you talking about?" He said, "Let's go to J.C. It won't cost anything. We can go for nothing. Or let's go to San Mateo." "Way down there?" "Yes, let's go down and check it out."

We went down and found a lady living down there who had a little place in the backyard. We called it the shack, a little building. We could stay there for five dollars a week. Get to sleep and get breakfast. I said, "What the hell are you going to be?" He said, "I'm going to be a dentist." I said, "I'm going to be an engineer."

Morris: Why not? What did your mom and grandmother think of this?

Williams: It was something I wanted to do. In other words, I'm bettering myself, not sitting around the house and getting into trouble. I wanted to do something so I wanted to go back to school. She said, "Fine, go ahead."

It didn't cost us anything. I was caddying. I would make, I don't know, five dollars a week sometimes. I made enough money to pay my room and board. So I signed up and went down there. I started taking courses. I never took trigonometry in high school. I got an A in trig, got an A in analytical geometry. I took physics, I took surveying, I took stuff I had never even heard of. I said, "Shit, this little stuff is nothing."

Morris: That's quite a lot of courses for junior college.

Williams: Because I told the counselors, "I want to go to Cal. I want to get into Cal." They said, "These are the courses that you've got to take because these are the same courses that you would take as a freshman at Cal." What I was doing in a way was I was starting Cal down there. No tuition or nothing. I was getting the same credit. In fact, I was getting better teaching in chemistry, physics. I took stuff I never thought of before. I decided I was going to get my old butt into gear and start doing things, start getting the grades. You're supposed to have two years at J.C. In other words, you put in two years at J.C. and you'll get a junior certificate.

Morris: Right. You go to Cal as a junior.

Williams: As a junior, yes. But I wanted to get in as a sophomore. So I did enough of that. I went up to the counselor and said, "Is this enough to get in as a sophomore?" "Sure." So I did.

Morris: Did you know anybody at Cal?

Williams: I knew a lot of guys, not too many guys. Older guys ended up going there, not many. I knew guys who had gone there. I knew all about the athletics. I used to sneak up there and climb under the fence. You know where Edwards Field is, don't you?

Morris: Yes.

Williams: But you know where the girl's gym is now?

Morris: Right.

Williams: The old track used to be right beside that. What's the name of the girl's gym?

Morris: Hearst.

Williams: Hearst. Right. The old track was behind that. We used to go up there and climb the fence.

Morris: Where there is now a big grass field?

Williams: Big grass field, right. They play soccer, stuff like that. We would sneak in there and climb under the fence and watch the guys run.

III AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, 1935-1939

Fascination with Airplanes: Hopes for an Engineering Career

- Morris: Was it the sports at Cal that made you want to go there?
- Williams: No. I wanted to go to college. In fact, sports wasn't in it. In other words, I knew I could run. I didn't know how good I was. I wanted to get that degree. Okay, fine. I signed up--.
- Morris: If you come in with your freshman grades in order, you come in as a sophomore.
- Williams: Sure. I signed up. Brutus didn't even know I was there. How could I announce myself. I was a nobody. I was just another guy who wanted to go to Cal. Later on, I went out for track. But I didn't go there for that. Nobody recruited me or anything. I was pretty good in junior college. I won the conference. Junior college conference. I won that but that's nothing like the Super Bowl or anything. That's nothing big.
- Morris: I wondered if the people who were in sports at Cal checked out the prep sports?
- Williams: No. No one approached me and I didn't care because I was going to play in the physics lab.
- Morris: Were you still headed toward engineering?
- Williams: Oh, yes. Here's the story. I went to the counselor; I can give you the guy's name. He said, "What do you want to be?" I said, "I want to be a mechanical engineer." "Look. You're crazy. Why don't you be a preacher? Why don't you be a real estate man." "What do you mean?" "You ain't going to get a job." "Sign me up for that, will you please." Later on when you're a senior, you go see the counselor and he said, "I'll tell you what. I'm going to arrange for you to get an interview with

General Motors, General Electric, Lockheed and so forth and let them tell you the same thing."

Morris: This is the same counselor?

Williams: Same counselor. I remember his goddamned name. Kelsey van Every.

Morris: That's a pretty fancy name.

Williams: Yes, right. In fact, I went to high school with his son. Anyway, the point was that that was what I wanted to do because I was fascinated with airplanes. I was an airplane nut. I used to make model planes. In fact, I have an article in there. I won a prize in the Oakland Tribune model airplane contest.

Morris: I saw that in the scrapbook. That's neat.

Williams: So I decided I was going to make it. I didn't burn up the course in the grades. I got a few A's and B's in some of the courses. In fact, I did okay. I was satisfied with my progress. For instance, you have to keep up your grades to be in sports. I was never in jeopardy.

Brutus as a coach knew every guy on the team and he knew everybody's grades. He could tell you what you got in differential calculus. He could tell me I got a B- in that course. "How are you doing in physics?" He was our father figure, not only to the track guys but to all the guys. He was that type of man.

Discrimination in Employment and Athletics

Morris: So what was this business about, "You had better be a preacher or real estate salesman?"

Williams: The counselor said that if you want to go to college, pick out something that you can be.

Morris: Because a black guy wouldn't get hired as an engineer?

Williams: Right. What the hell. What kind of engineer are you going to be. Let me tell you about this. One thing in the back of my mind. One summer I had a job at the water company cutting weeds. Up there around the Kensington reservoir.

Morris: Where Tilden Park is now?

Williams: And at the other one in East Oakland. They had a couple of these places where the water is cleaned. They filter it through the filter plants. It was a lot of fun working there. There were settling ponds when the water came in from the Sierras. Sometimes there'd be trout in there that came in through the pipes. I was hoping--they hire engineers, this would be a nice company to work with. I talked to the personnel guy but--you know. He gave me the same arguments. East Bay MUD [Municipal Utility District], I bet they've got a thousand niggers down there working. [laughter] Now they'd really want to hire you--a black and an engineer.

Morris: Since affirmative action.

Williams: I guess so. Lionel Wilson, the mayor, he and I were classmates.

Morris: That's right.

Williams: In those days there weren't any Negro engineers, although Lee Purnell, who was ahead of me at Cal, was an engineer, somewhere in Southern California, I think. The thing is that you might consider--.

Morris: That's part of what the NAACP was pushing for in the thirties, opening up jobs.

Williams: My main thing I can say about Cal, of course, there wasn't any big push. They didn't have any placement program to help, not blacks, not anybody. No graduate student placement to help you find a job.

Morris: But there didn't seem to be any problem of getting into Cal or taking a full course--.

Williams: Oh, no. There were a lot of black kids going to Cal.

Morris: Really?

Williams: Oh, sure. A lot of them.

Morris: How many, would you say, when you were there?

Williams: Probably thirty or forty. Maybe more. I don't know. I knew them all. I knew some of them who weren't black.

Morris: They passed?

Williams: Yes. You've got it. In fact, let me tell you something else. The whole time when I came along, in certain sports they didn't play black athletes. You never heard of a black basketball player in the Pacific Coast Conference. You know who the first one was? Jackie Robinson, for UCLA. First one. In fact, USC [University of Southern California], I hate those people. They would recruit black athletes and they wouldn't play them. They would redshirt them even though the guy was a damn good player.

Morris: That's bad.

Williams: That's bad. That's the way they did it. They had a bunch of black athletes or guys whom you would think they didn't want to play.

Morris: Why did they recruit them if they were going to redshirt them?

Williams: So they wouldn't go to UCLA or Cal; so they didn't have to play against them.

Morris: You hear some strange things about USC.

Williams: That's the way it is. Damn right. A guy down there, Slick Saki, a Japanese guy, hell of a football player. USC recruited him and wouldn't let him play.

Morris: What about basketball?

Williams: Just the coaches. Vesta, my wife [Vesta Young Williams], she went to [University of] Illinois. The same thing there in the Big Ten, in the Ivy League, or any of the big schools. You never heard of any black basketball players. Now in this day and age, there is no school where there are no black basketball players. Christ, they've got them in Georgia--.

Of course, I might have ended up in Stanford. My coach when I was at San Mateo, Tex Byrd, he was a Stanford man and a hell of a nice guy. Really interested in us as people. He said, "Archie, if you were white, I could get you into Stanford just like that. Get you a scholarship." In fact, my teammates, five of them from the San Mateo team went right to Stanford. They gave them a red uniform, gave them a scholarship and saw they got along okay.

Morris: So Stanford was keeping an eye on what was going on at schools around.

Williams: Stanford was close by. Look at Stanford, they didn't have any black athletes. The only black guys at Stanford were washing

dishes in the frat houses. I didn't know anybody who went to Stanford, any black people. The word was that you couldn't even get into Stanford. I don't know. I wouldn't want--. The hell with them redskins.¹

Morris: That would make it kind of tough.

Williams: I never got beat by one of those guys either. [laughter]

Morris: What did it take to open up college sports? When did Jackie Robinson--?

Williams: Late thirties. He was playing on a football team in 1938, Jackie, Kenny Washington, and those guys. Have you ever seen a guy in a movie called Woodrow Stroud? He's a big black guy. He was in The Magnificent Seven. Big old strong, strapping guy. He was on the team with Jackie Robinson. Jackie Robinson's brother was on the Olympic team with me.

It was Branch Rickey, I heard, who made things work out for Jackie in big league baseball. Jackie Robinson was playing in the black league, and after the regular season, they'd go barnstorm around the country and beat the tar out of the white guys.

Rickey knew there were lots of good black athletes. He decided Jackie Robinson was a "good nigger" who could make it and take it from the other players. That figured, because he had gone to Pasadena High School; his mom or dad worked in Pasadena, so he had been brought up in a white town. You know, he was everything in sports--he could of made it in football or track as a pro, as well as in baseball. He used to beat up on the guys on his own track team to show them he could take it.

Anyhow, I was told that Rickey used to tell him what to say and how to act around the white guys. He took him to Canada first, to Montreal, to get him experience and get him ready for the big leagues. You know, even more than Jesse Owens, Robinson was the athlete of the century. Paul Robeson was a good athlete too, even before he became a famous singer. There were lots of good black athletes around L.A.

Morris: There is a report that Clint Evans [UC baseball coach] was not happy about having black guys on his teams.

¹Until the 1970s, Stanford teams, now called Cardinals, were known as Indians.

Williams: Probably not. Nibs Price [basketball coach] was probably the same way. In fact, I don't know if anybody went out for it. Actually, in those days, Brutus was an exception. For anybody, he was an exception. It was an old boys' club. That's how they controlled it.

Morris: Each other and the teams?

Williams: Sure. In other words, they said, "It's a gentlemen's agreement. We won't play no jungle bunnies." [laughter] I knew Clint okay. His office was next to Brutus'. I was friendly with him. I never thought about that. Nibs was the same way. In fact, Nibs had a black player he didn't know about. It was a hell of a joke, a guy named Thurston Davis. He was a real light-skinned guy. He actually looked like a German. He had real yellow hair, kind of kinky hair. If you put him in with a bunch of blacks, you would buy it. But with white kids, he looked like a white kid. He was a star player on the team. All of us knew about it and we never said anything. He didn't know that we knew. But he played on the team back in 1938 or 1939. Thurston Davis.

Morris: Did he grow up around the Bay Area?

Williams: No, he was from L.A. I think.

Morris: But the word came along with him?

Williams: Yes. He came from the L.A. and the guys down there said, "Nigger. He's a Nigger kid. But we don't care. Let him get away with it. We've got a good joke going."

Morris: A good joke on the white folk?

Williams: Sure. That's right. But that's the way it was. Swimming--. Well, none of us went out for swimming or golf or anything. I'm not bitter about the thing because the main thing was I got in. The main reason: I saw that Campanile and I wanted to go to that goddamned school. I made it and I got my degree.

Morris: Your grades held up even though you were in all those sports.

Williams: Damn right. I got through and passed. In fact, the guy from Westinghouse said, "You've got a nice record here. Don't call us, we'll call you."

Fall 1935 Track Season: Coach Brutus Hamilton

Morris: Oh, my. Let's come back to sports. When did you come into contact with Brutus?

Williams: I went out for what they call fall track. Track season is spring. I went out for fall track. I knew some of the guys because some of them were from junior college.

Morris: From San Mateo?

Williams: Yes, and a couple of guys from Sacramento. Tom Moore, his picture is in here. I think there was one from Marin. Of course, there was a regular guide when you went out. I started working out, started running and started beating them. That's it.

Morris: Somebody notices when you win.

Williams: The guys you are beating notice you. "Where the hell that Nigger come from?" Well, I got better. Brutus worked hard with me, gave me more exercises, gave me coaching and all, and he just made me feel good. As I said, he showed a lot of interest in what I was doing, other than running track.

Morris: So his idea was the whole student, not just your sport.

Williams: Oh, yes. We were here to get an education. He was that way with a lot of guys. He got mad at some of the guys, not because they were flunking off the team, but they were just screwing off. Nowadays, they have what they call recruiting.

[Tape Interruption]##

Williams: I got started when I was in junior college down at San Mateo.

Morris: You got in the habit of staying in training.

Williams: Actually, you got competition. In high school, you don't have much competition. You have competition but you're not pushing it to the limit. You get in junior college, you're sort of halfway between high school and college. Some of the junior college guys are just barely at that level. Sometimes at the track meets that you have, you do compete against the college guys. They have open meets. Anybody can be in it. Every now and then you run up against a real good runner, a good athlete. In fact, our junior college league was a pretty tough league because most of the guys from the junior college went on to

because most of the guys from the junior college went on to another college. They went on to USC, they went on to Stanford--.

Morris: It really worked the way junior college was set up to do, to feed academically into the university.

Williams: Exactly. I never would have gotten into Cal if it hadn't been for that. It's tough to take those courses, the courses I took in junior college. If I took those at Cal, I would be competing against a bunch of hot-shot high school seniors and I would have been out of my league. But I think everybody I was with in junior college was in my same category. Some of those guys--.

Morris: --were taking a second shot at it?

Williams: A second shot. Of course, some of them were good students for whom junior college was cheap. In other words, if you lived in Burlingame, San Mateo, and Palo Alto--a lot of those kids down there come from pretty well-off families. You've heard of Woodside, haven't you?

Morris: That's a pretty classy area down there.

Williams: [Makes whooshing sound] Some of those kids were from Woodside. They could go to Stanford just like nothing; money didn't mean a thing. They drove to school in cars. Some of those guys could go ahead and just start at Cal if they wanted to, or start at Stanford.

Anyway, the point is that's where I kind of got started. I had a chance to run. In junior college, we would compete against the Cal freshman and Stanford freshman, the lowerclassmen. You had an idea how to rate yourself. How well you would do against those guys would tell you how you would do later on.

Morris: How much time did you spend training and working out with the team?

Williams: In those days, you worked out every afternoon from 3:00 until 5:00. In fact, in San Mateo, we didn't have a track. The JC in San Mateo was an old high school in the middle of town. They didn't have any sports facilities. They had a gym. The baseball team would go down to city park to play baseball. We had to ride the bus up to Burlingame High School to run and practice track, which is five miles away. When we got back from there, we never got a hot shower. All the baseball players used up all the hot water.

Morris: Oh, dear.

Williams: So that was one of the things. We were a bunch of kids; we didn't care. I went there for a year and a half. I started there in the spring of 1934. The next season was 1935. I started Cal in the fall of 1935. I started as a sophomore.

Morris: The fall of 1935?

Williams: That's right.

IV THE 1936 OLYMPICS

Preliminaries: Long Beach Relays, NCAA in Chicago, Pacific Coast Conference

Morris: You mean, then, the next summer, June, July of 1936, you were off to Berlin?

Williams: That's right.

Morris: That's pretty speedy. [chuckling]

Williams: That's the way it was. In fact, they called it the baptism of fire. I got thrown in there with the tough guys. In 1936, the spring, that's when I started competing, when we had our regular meets against the Olympic Club and the University of Washington, Washington State, USC, UCLA, and so forth like that. In other words, every week--.

Morris: You were running against somebody.

Williams: Running. Exactly. Like that. The first real big racing I had was kind of weird. Before the season started they had a thing called Long Beach Relays. It's sort of a get-together before the season started. This is just some of things they put on down there. They had junior college teams, college teams. They had different categories.

Morris: At Long Beach State College?

Williams: No. They called it Long Beach Relays. They had junior college, high school, and university level. We had a relay team. We weren't even heard of. So we got in there and kicked their butt. I beat USC and Stanford. "Where did this coon come from?"

Morris: You were running on the relay team.

Williams: Right. Our relay team against them, we won the relay. I was the anchorman on the relay team. These guys said, "Who's this guy? Where does he come from?" That was the first thing that convinced me that I could do it.

Morris: This was better than you had run before?

Williams: Sure. Oh, yes. Because USC, that was just like Notre Dame or the New York Yankees. Or Stanford. That was really the frosting on the cake, to beat Stanford. They weren't near. Or UCLA. In fact, we smoked them. [laughter]

Anyway, the season went on and I started wondering. In this book they have little write-ups about our different meets and all.

Morris: What a finish that was. Here you go. This is Chicago.

Williams: Chicago. That's where I made the record.

We had all the conference meets against the school. Then the biggest meet of the season, this college season was what we called the PCC, Pacific Coast Conference. Now it's the PAC-10. It was at Berkeley and I won that. Here's a picture of the 220. Floyd Weber and those guys.

Morris: "Draper of USC winning the 220 Dash in the Pacific Coast Conference with Archie Williams taking second."

Williams: That's right. The 220 was not my regular race. But I was just--.

Morris: Filling in for somebody?

Williams: Forget filling in. We didn't have anybody else.

Morris: "Third fastest 440 time on record." Here it says, "The Golden Bear Ace is certain to compete for the United States in the Olympic Games at Berlin. Archie ran the race in 46.8 seconds, four tenths of a second under the world's record." Wow.

Williams: Anyway we had that meet. They had a Pacific Coast AAU meet. They had it down at Stanford. They did pretty good at that. Then we went back to Chicago for the nationals, the NCAA. That's when I made the record.

Morris: Wonderful photographs. Okay. These are April 26, 1936 papers. This was the big meet.

Williams: That's against Stanford. I won two races in that meet. But then they beat us. They won the other parts. They had a bunch of good field events and things. Stanford recruited athletes all over the place.

Morris: Even then.

Williams: Oh, sure. They had something to offer them. They had some money. They could give them room and board and things like that.

More About Brutus Hamilton

Morris: Was it the newspaper guys, was it Brutus, or was it Archie who first said, "I think this guy is Olympic quality?"

Williams: I don't know. In those days, anybody who was doing pretty good, "Hey, man, this guy is Olympic material." But Brutus never said anything. Brutus never kidded you about how you were doing. He never even bragged about you. He never would boost your ego. He was the other way. The kind of "Take it easy," that kind of type of guy. In other words, he would just keep an even keel.

Morris: Slow and steady wins the race?

Williams: Sure. That's right. Do your thing. You know who Brutus was. Brutus got second in the decathlon in the Olympics in 1920.

Morris: So he knew what it was all about.

Williams: Yes. He knew where the body was buried. He also got a tryout with the New York Yankees in baseball.

Morris: Did he?

Williams: Yes. He also was a boxing champion in the U.S. Army. One day, one of my pals, and his name is Greg Stout, and I said (it must have been at the end of the season), "Let's go out and play golf." We would go out in Alameda. "Hey Brutus, you want to go play golf with us?" "I don't know how to play golf." "Come on, Coach, let's go." He took us out there and beat our ass. He was that type of guy. Just superman.

Morris: Did he ever talk about why he took up college coaching rather than playing pro ball himself?

- Williams: Actually he was an educator. He was an English teacher, that's what he was. An English major.
- Morris: I was surprised to read that.¹
- Williams: I have some letters that he wrote. Geez, it's almost like Shakespeare, the way he handled words. In other words, anything that he took up, he was good at it. The main thing, he was a man among the men. In anything.
- Morris: So that if you were on his track team, you wanted to do your best for Brutus, that kind of thing?
- Williams: Exactly. You didn't want to let your coach down. He said, "You can beat these guys." But he never said, "You're better than him," or "He's better than you." Nothing like that. You were you. It was up to you.
- Morris: I hear that he used to be out there at the track every afternoon.
- Williams: All the time. Just like this. He would wear a sweat suit just like I'm wearing today.
- Morris: Did he?
- Williams: Sure. He was out there all the time. Like I say, there are more guys who came to him. These were not track guys. Football guys, any guy. He was their type of guy. His office was up there--. Do you know where Stephens Union is?
- Morris: Right. It's now a classroom building.
- Williams: His office was in there. Everybody was packed in that place and they were talking. He always had a lot of stories to tell. In fact he had coached--. You may have heard of somebody by the name of Glen Cunningham, the great miler?
- Morris: Yes.
- Williams: He coached Glen at Kansas.
- Morris: Cunningham had won some medals in 1932.
- Williams: He was in the 1936 Olympics; he got second. In fact, we trained together. He died last year. I went to talk to him a few months before he died. A hell of a guy.

¹Brutus Hamilton, Student Athletics and the Voluntary Discipline, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, 1967.

All the athletes at the other schools knew Brutus. They would ask, "How's your coach doing?" He was a coach's coach. He didn't emphasize technique. He didn't criticize little nit-picking stuff in other words. He knew how to get you to do your best. That's the main thing. That's what a good coach is.

Qualifying Meets

Morris: It was just sort of all of the sudden, Archie was on the U.S. Olympic Team?

Williams: Actually, no. There was a lot of in-between. For instance, we went to Chicago for this NCAA effort.

Morris: And Jesse Owens was running there too.

Williams: He was there, right. Jesse was there. In fact, all of the guys. That was the first chance I had to meet all the real heavyweights in track. All the good track men were college boys. Indiana had a bunch of good guys, Ohio State where Jesse was. USC. A lot of Ivy League guys. Let's see. There was a bunch from Georgia Tech, those guys. I got to meet the real big shots, the heavy-duty athletes.

After that, then they had another meet up in Milwaukee. If you win in NCAA, you automatically qualify for the Olympic finals. But then they had the qualifying meet up in Milwaukee. They call it the Central Division. I ran in that just to stay ready for competition.

I ran in that thing and then after that, the Olympic finals were in New York City. We went from there, from Chicago to New York, and we trained there, at Columbia University. Then they had the trials at this place called Randall's Island out there in New York Harbor. Boy, that was a heck of a thing because it was July something. Hot, and it poured. You couldn't find a shady spot. In fact, I found a place under a bleacher. I went under it and lay down. Guys were falling down like flies.

Morris: For somebody from the nice, balmy, foggy Bay Area, that would be fierce.

Williams: Oh, it's a killer. I lost ten pounds from working out. The trials were-- Well, actually, I guess I was a young dumb kid. I didn't get too excited like some of the guys. I was nervous

like I always was but I wasn't scared or anything. To me, it was just never a big thing. It was something I had to do. So there was a lot of noise in the crowd; you don't have any feelings. I know what this race is going to be. I gotta run it. So I got in the race and ran the race. I never thought about tactics or anything. You just do it, get out there and do it.

Morris: Was Brutus there with you?

Williams: You bet. Right there.

Morris: No strategy or "do this or that" against those guys.

Williams: Just do it. That's right.

Morris: My, how things have changed.

Williams: There's not too much strategy in it now. If you run, you just run fast. The main thing is, you run faster than they do, don't fall down and don't run out of gas. Sometimes that happens to you. You always do it.

Morris: Here we go. This is again on your 46.8 record. [Reads from clipping] "Williams turned in the third fastest quarter mile ever run in America and he did it after running at least three yards further than the regulation distance."

Williams: Well, the track was measured wrong.

Morris: Was it?

Williams: It's like a horse race. They had everybody start off, break from the pole. You have to run around the other guys. In fact, in those days they were pretty rough. There was an awful lot of hell-blowing and stuff like that. So the main thing is to give yourself--. Because most of these later races were run in lanes. They run them in lanes now. The Olympics were in lanes.

Morris: They were not carefully defined lanes?

Williams: Before that, in the States, they ran them differently. They ran them in horse race starts. Let's see, [reads from newspaper] "Lane turn, weather may stop Archie going." Ha, Ha, Ha.

Morris: So you had all of that. You had people elbowing you because there were no lanes and funny turns in the track?

Williams: Sure. That's right.

Morris: And the hot weather.

Williams: Sure. It's still the same.

Morris: And here is the Chronicle Sporting Green for June 20, 1936. You broke your own record?

Williams: Yes.

Morris: [Reads clipping] "Williams breaks 400-meter mark at NCAA. Stops the clock at 46.1."

Williams: Yes.

Morris: Wow. So you just kept on running and by the end of June you were on the ship to Berlin.

Williams: Actually, they had this trial. The way they worked it, they had the trials. During the trials, they have to have heats, you know.

Morris: Yes.

Williams: Elimination heats. Brutus always told me, "Look, some of these guys want to save themselves in a race. Every race that you run is a final. If you don't win, then it is final."

Morris: That's kind of an interesting idea, as a philosophy to live with.

Williams: Think about it as just a final. If you don't win this race, you don't get to the next race. Or if you lose, it's a final. Get your hat. Of course, everybody knew that. Everybody was doing the same thing, trying their hardest. Read that to me. [laughter. Points out foreign language clippings.] That's Chinese and that's Japanese, I think. Somebody sent it to me.

Morris: Isn't that wonderful. In Chinese characters, Archie's victory account.

Williams: See that name, Archie Williams. Can't you read that? [laughter] Come on.

Morris: I'm sorry. I'm not that good. That's wonderful.

Williams: Anyway, the main thing was to get on that boat. I saw a lot of guys, friends of mine, and they didn't make it. I really felt bad, sorry for them, because they tried their best. Some of

them pulled their muscle, had sore muscles. One fellow, Don Lashett[?], he fell down, tripped, and he got spiked. Guys like the high jumper, they have to jump over the stick, you know. He just barely ticked it off. One fellow, George Verhoff, who was from San Francisco, who was a high school kid, he broke the world's record in the pole vault the week before the Olympic trials. In the trials, he didn't make it.

Morris: Oh, boy.

Williams: Just like that. In other words, he made the world's record but then the next week, he couldn't do it.

Morris: A good day or a bad day.

Williams: Yes, that's right. That happened to a lot of fellows. You could almost make up a team of the guys who didn't make it that would be as good as the team that made it.

Morris: Well, it's always seemed to me that if you are good enough to get to the Olympics, you're a better athlete than 99.9 percent of folks in the rest of the world who are competitors.

Williams: Well, yes. I guess. One guy asked me once, "Hey, how do you feel to be the best in the world?" I said, "What the hell are you talking about? Down there in Africa there is a little guy running away from a lion."

Morris: He just hasn't heard about the Olympics.

Williams: The Olympics, right. He's heard about lions.

What I am saying is that I beat everybody who showed up. All I could say is that I beat the guy who showed up for the race. Anybody who's got a record or a medal like that, you don't own it. You borrow it. That's all it means.

Logistics: Black Competitors

Morris: Who paid for the ship ticket and all that?

Williams: Every track meet that they had, all the money that they take in goes into that expense fund. Right now, they've got this thing where they are raising money. In those days it was really tough. They didn't have AT&T and Preparation H and Nike shoes and stuff. But they got contributions, it was stripped down

like it's supposed to be. They didn't have very much money, in other words. I guess they might even have gotten some money from the government. For instance, once you make a team, they put you up in a hotel. What the heck did we stay at? Hotel Edison, I think it was, in New York. They handed out the uniform. We had a blue coat with a shield on it and a straw hat and a pair of those Pat Boone powder-white shoes. We looked like the Beach Boys.

Morris: Oh, those saddle-shoe things?

Williams: Yes. Oh, yes.

Morris: Those were pretty slick in the thirties.

Williams: I guess.

Morris: They were not West Coast, though.

Williams: Oh, no. They had us all decked out. We even had some berets that we wore. Anyway, they herded us onto the boat and we took off. There were nine black track athletes. There were more black athletes. There were some boxers. One guy, a guy named Tarzan Brown, a guy from Narragansett Race Track in--?

Morris: Rhode Island.

Williams: Rhode Island, yes. He was from Rhode Island and he was an Indian. He was as black as Louis Armstrong.

Morris: An American Indian?

Williams: He was an American Indian. But he said, "I'm a brother." He didn't want to be an Indian no more. He hung out with us guys.

Morris: Was brother what you said in 1936?

Williams: Something like that. A blood, a brother, something like that. We made jokes like that. In fact, I'll say this. The Olympic Committee wanted to make sure that they didn't mix us up with the other guys.

Morris: Black guys and white guys.

Williams: They put us all together in the same stateroom on the boat, all together in the Olympic village. To me it didn't matter at first; these guys were all my friends. But it was sort of like saying, "We want to make sure that you are with your own kind." In fact, I didn't have as much in common with some of these kids

as with the white kids I went to college with. It didn't mean anything to me one way or the other.

But I did feel there was a lot of racial prejudice, a feeling that they looked at us as different. There had been black athletes before us, in the 1932 Olympics, though, so they couldn't deny us the opportunity to try out.

Morris: Wasn't there another black guy from Cal on the team?

Williams: Sure. From UCLA, Jimmy LuValle. James LuValle. In fact, he was in the same race I was in. He did something with his life. He was an honor student from UCLA, Phi Beta Kappa in physical chemistry. He was a Rhodes Scholar candidate. You know who Whizzer White is, don't you?

Morris: Yes.

Williams: U.S. Supreme Court Justice [Byron] White. He and Whizzer White were competing for the Rhodes Scholarship. Of course, Whizzer White won. Right now, he [LuValle] is a professor emeritus at Stanford. He's got more degrees than a thermometer. [laughter]

Morris: But he didn't make it to the Rhodes Scholarship? White beat him out?

Williams: He didn't make that. Whizzer White was chosen over him.

Morris: I was thinking of Bob Clark, too.

Williams: Oh, Bob Clark. Hell, yes. Actually, he was a Cal man. He was a graduate student. He was training when I was in 1936. He was training for the decathlon. He placed second. We were roommates.

We were roommates whenever we travelled together, at least with the Cal guys.

Morris: That's pretty good. Two guys from Cal winning medals that year.

Williams: We felt pride.

Morris: I should say.

Williams: In fact, when I was running the race, we were down there getting ready for the race and people were yelling and screaming, "Do one for Cal." You know, it made you feel pretty good in Germany.

The Trip to Berlin

Morris: I should say. The newspaper article I read said there were about fifty rooters who went along with the team.¹

Williams: Sure. They had a whole bunch of deadheads on the boat. One of the biggest deals that the guys had was they had what they called managers. The manager for a team is the guy who keeps track of the towels; they are "gofers" for the team, like they have at the football teams. Most of them were the sons of other coaches or sons of officials. They were the first ones on the bus, the first ones in the chow line; they were going along for the ride. Great, that's okay.

##

Williams: Here I am sitting up in one of these big New York ocean liners. They had three or four different dining halls. You could go in there any time of day to get something to eat. Before breakfast, you would order breakfast from a menu, coffee break at ten o'clock, a big lunch, tea time in the afternoon. All you did was eat. In fact, I guess I gained about fifteen pounds.

And you couldn't practice on the boat. We would do exercises, pushups and stuff. We couldn't run or anything. The trip was fine. It was just a trip. We played a lot of cards.

Morris: The paper said a third of the people in the American squad got sick. Is that true?²

Williams: No, I don't think so. They might have. They might have eaten too much. Some of them had hangovers too.

Morris: They had colds and bad weather.

Williams: No, no. The newspaper guys have to have something to write about. They had a big scandal. Do you remember what's her name? Eleanor Holm, the swimmer.

She was kind of a celeb. She was goodlooking and she had hung out with the newspaper men and they partied a lot. In

¹Oakland Tribune sports section, July 20, 1936.

²Oakland Tribune sports section, July 30, 1936.

fact, that's what got to be the big scandal. She was partying with these newspaper guys. They put her off the team, or they disqualified her because of conduct or something. Oh, I know what it was. I don't know if you should put this in the record but I think that she was rooming with one of those little teenage divers and swimmers. She was partying up in the room in front of this little girl. In fact, the little girl complained to her mother or something like that. Something like one of these kinds of things.

Morris: Not the way my mother told me it should be, yes.

Williams: I guess. Something like that. But anyway, that's what we heard. In fact, on the train from Hamburg to Berlin, some of the other swim guys, they tried to get us to sign a petition that if they didn't reinstate her, we would not compete. I said, "No, not me. Don't get me into that mess." There was a lot of talk. The newspaper guys would pick anything if they could make a news item out of it.

Average Germans' Response: IntraOlympics Tensions

Morris: Did anybody have any anxieties about the fact that Hitler and the Nazis were in control of the government?

Williams: No. That was something that again makes good copy. I can speak for the black athletes. They treated us probably better than anybody else. They idolized us. They all wanted to come to us. They wanted autographs. They wanted to take us to their house to meet their family. They wanted to do things for us, take you for a ride in their car.

Morris: This is just the average German folks on the streets?

Williams: Average German. Even the athletes, the same way. They were real friendly. They were just a bunch of young college guys. That's what the Olympics were all about. We were all friends, you know. I heard about this politics. I didn't know too much about that at all. They said Hitler was a bad guy. He don't like Jews and he don't like blacks. I said, "Who cares? That's his problem." I didn't worry about it.

Morris: That's what is really interesting, because the echo is still around now that the German officials did not want to give the gold medals to black athletes who won.

Williams: They didn't give the medals. You see, the Germans built the stadium and were the hosts, but everything was done by the committee. Most of them were French and Belgians. Just Europeans. The Olympic Committee ran the thing. The Germans couldn't say anything about how it was conducted. They just furnished everything. They furnished the stadium and all our logistics and all.

There was a lot of talk about-- Well, there were some Jewish boys, two Jewish boys, who didn't get to compete: Sam Stoller and Marty Glickman. Marty Glickman, you might have heard of him. Later on, he became a famous announcer; he announced basketball games in New York. Anyway, they went over as alternates for the 400-meter relay. They were the only two track athletes who went that never got to compete. They were the only ones who never got to do anything. And the main reason was good old Dean Cromwell, the coach from USC, he was one of the big shots as far as the coaches. He had two runners, Floyd Draper and Frank Wykoff. He would make sure that his two boys got into the relay. Put it this way: the word was that Draper was the one who made sure that Sam Stoller and Marty Glickman didn't compete.

Morris: That would suggest that if there was discrimination on race, it was on this side of the Atlantic.

Williams: Exactly. It wasn't racial. He was against any white boys who were going to be against his white boys. In other words, for the relay you had Jesse Owens and Ralph Metcalfe, who had just gotten one-two in the hundred meters. They could put anybody in, two other guys, they could even put me in there, anybody else in there--.

Morris: And those two would win the race.

Williams: Oh, yes. They won the race. They gave fifty yards in the first part of it.

Morris: The first lane.

Williams: They won by so damn much. The picture didn't even show the other guys in the race. They could have had anybody to run. So there was a little squawk. They are still talking about it now. They're saying that the reason that these two guys didn't get to compete was that they were Jewish, but that's not the main reason. The main reason was that they weren't from USC. [laughter] That's right. There is a lot of politics in that stuff. In fact, it could happen nowadays. In other words, the

people who are running the Olympics, they can more or less decide who does what and so forth.

Morris: It is interesting, looking back on it now, that there were nine black guys on the American team. That sounds like quite a lot for those days.

Williams: We won more medals than the rest of the team.

Morris: Absolutely.

Williams: Jesse Owens won four. In fact, every one of us. There was only one guy who didn't get a medal, Johnnie Brooks. He was a long-jumper from Chicago. Every one of us got a medal. I'll show you the medal.

Morris: I would like to see that.

[background noise as Williams goes to get the medal].

Morris: [Reads medal] "Archie Williams, 400-meter run, 46.5 seconds." That's beautiful. I just happened to bring my camera along. If you don't mind, I would like to take a picture. [see frontispiece] It isn't often I get to meet the winner of an Olympic medal.

Have you been over to the campus to see your picture in Sproul Hall?

Williams: I've seen the ones in the football stadium [Athletic Hall of Fame].

Morris: Let's get your medal in the picture.

Williams: There.

Morris: [Takes picture] That's great. Thank you. I'll take another just to be on the safe side. [Takes second photo] There we go.

In the Olympic Village

Williams: Actually, when I went over, the Olympics itself was so big, too much for a little dumb kid like I was to appreciate it all. They had this village where we lived. They landscaped it. It was designed to be an officer's training camp after the Olympics were over. That's what it was for. They had these cottages with little apartments in the cottages. Each cottage had a room

at the end, a recreational room. It had a great bathroom. You even had a barbershop and stuff like that. In other words, it was first class, I mean really first class.

Each country had a dining hall commensurate with the size of the country. We had one of the biggest dining halls of anybody. The Americans finish a lot of food. In fact, in our dining halls, we had tables with big bowls of fruit, lots of cake, cookies, big pitchers of milk. We had everything. Every time you wanted to, you could go in and get it. In fact, most of these foreign athletes wanted to be friends.

Morris: They would come over--.

Williams: They wanted to make friends with you. They would come over to eat. They were hungry. We were eating like crazy.

Morris: There wasn't a trainer saying, "Eat this; don't eat that. Eat some more. Don't eat."

Williams: No, Brutus said, "Eat what you get. Eat what you can get your hands on. I will work it off of you."

Morris: Really?

Williams: Actually, the way it works, they didn't have a lot of team trainers. In other words, there was one fellow that I knew. He was from Princeton, Seymour[?]-. He used to be the trainer of-. They took a bunch of trainers over there. This one guy, I knew his son. A real nice guy, he kind of looked out for me.

Morris: Somebody from the Bay Area?

Williams: No, this fellow was from Princeton, New Jersey. He was a trainer for Princeton. Anyway, there were some trainers from different colleges. I've got an Olympic book; they listed the guys. A matter of fact, I associated with this particular fellow because he gave me the rubdowns and all. For the training and the diet and stuff, they didn't worry about that. Maybe they did for somebody but not for me.

Morris: They figured you track guys were going to run it off anyway?

Williams: Sure. That's right because there was nothing special about eating for the Olympics. You ate to stay alive; you ate to make it. We didn't eat too much heavy, fat food. We ate a lot of cereal and fruit. Just some good eating stuff. There was plenty of that. In fact, I remember I got a case of pineapple juice on the boat. I never even had any place to put it. They

just gave it to me. Oh, yes, I got a big box full of Ovaltine.
[laughter]

Morris: Yes. Ovaltine was very popular in those days. It was supposed to be very good for you.

Williams: Yes. And we had all the milk we wanted, things like that.
[looks at picture] There he is, in Ohio.

Morris: Yes. Very good dresser.

Williams: That's his trademark. What's its name. That Bo--hat.

Morris: Fedora hat and three-piece suit.

Williams: Right. He was a real gentlemen.

Morris: What is this breakfast dish that it says here?

Williams: I don't know.

Morris: "This series on the home life of Northern California's representatives." I missed this in my search through the papers.

Williams: I don't know. Whatever you found there--.

Morris: This is from the Chronicle I think. July 20, 1936. "We still do not know what he gulps when he gets up. He has not eaten breakfast for several days. I would be untrue to my trust if I purported to tell what he ate at breakfast."

Williams: Who was saying that?

Morris: This is Will Connolly who writes this article.

Williams: Oh, yes. Those guys, the newspaper men. They are on the spot. They have to say something.

Morris: "He's the first man out to practice at Edwards Field in Berkeley and the last man to leave. In the cool of the evening, he can be seen chasing himself around the track until the groundskeeper gave him the bum's rush so he could lock up the place. A great believer in comfort, Archie brings his bedroom slippers to track meets."

Williams: Where did he get that crap from?

Morris: "The spike shoes hurt his socks." Yes? Is this true?

Williams: I don't remember that.

Morris: Well, you're right. It says, "He came to California from Sacramento Junior College."

Williams: San Mateo.

Morris: I tell you!

Williams: It's all right.

Morris: It says, "Hamilton followed a careful and shrewd program to put Archie where he is today. Brutus sometimes held him out of the furlong and relay and concentrated on the 440." Yes?

Williams: That's what you've got right there. [Looks at a picture] Jimmie Boy.

Getting Ready

Morris: Oh, that's great. July 28. "Archie Williams, great University of California 400-meter ace and his principal rival and teammate, Jimmy LuValle of UCLA, are shown aboard the S.S. Manhattan." Did you run sprints on the boat?

Williams: No. You couldn't do any running like that. Just run up and down. They asked you to make a pose there. You couldn't do anything on that boat. We did situps and pushups, things like that. You see, nowadays, these guys travel by air. They're there just like that. But between that meet--. It was about two weeks between the trials and when we got over there. We had to start over again. It was kind of tough because they were trying to get the whole thing over with. For instance, in our case, normally you would have to have preliminaries. In this particular race, we had one preliminary, say, ten o'clock this morning, today, the next preliminary, two o'clock in the afternoon the same day. Then the next day, which was going to be the final day, you run the semis at three-thirty and the finals at five o'clock. You had an hour and a half between that. So within a twenty-four period we ran four helluva races.

Morris: And the final was the Olympic competition?

Williams: That's right. The final race.

Morris: Good heavens.

Williams: Everybody. That's why I said that every race I ran, I would think about it as a final. In other words, it is a final if you don't win it.

Morris: Was that because that Olympics was a shorter time span allowed for?

Williams: No, that's the way they set it up. There weren't that many athletes in it, like it is now. They have many more [now]. They had so many things that they had to run off and you had so much time frame to run it in. So they'd just run them through.

Morris: It looked like the first races were on August 2 and 3.

Williams: Yes.

Morris: Then your race was on the seventh.

Williams: Right.

Morris: What did you do for those five days?

Williams: Just work out and get ready for our races. We were practicing.

Morris: Did you get to spend any time in the arena watching the Olympic competition?

Williams: Sometimes after workout we would go down there. We would go down there after we would get through working out to see the rest of it. We tried to. I wanted to see it all. I saw most of it.

Morris: Did you get to do any of your preliminaries actually on the course you were going to run in the--?

Williams: Oh, no. They had a practice track in the Olympic village. On the day of your race, you would get out there and run around the track. Run up and down the track, you know, and warm up. That's all you could do, just warming up.

Morris: It rained off and on that week.

Williams: Yes, the weather was kind of rowdy. It wasn't real hot. It was summertime here but it wasn't summertime weather. It reminded me of this kind of weather. You do better in hot weather. But it wasn't hot then. It was cold.

Morris: What about a wet track?

Williams: It was just a plain old dirt track. It was a cinder track.

Morris: If it had been raining the day before, wouldn't that--?

Williams: It wasn't raining. They would dry it out. They would rake it and smooth it. The track was fine. Nowadays, they've got these tracks at Edwards; they call them all-weather. They are composition, sort of like Astroturf like the football players play on. Like that floor mat [indicates indoor-outdoor fabric]. It has a rubber cushion underneath. You feel you can walk as fast as you can run on it. It has this spring, you know.

Morris: Does that affect a runner's performance?

Williams: Sure. These guys have knocked a couple of seconds off their time, even the long races. It is easier on your legs. You're not pounding on dirt or you're not pounding on boards, just spring. It's great.

Running the 440-Meter Race; On the Winners' Platform

Morris: So you've been really cool, all the way through your training and your competition.

Williams: Sure.

Morris: Did you get anxieties when you were actually faced with the Olympic stadium?

Williams: I guess. Like I was saying, you're talking about something that was fifty years ago, sixty years ago. I have flashbacks but I was a kid and was too young to be scared.

Morris: Were you too young to be pleased with yourself to be here in this world class-club?

Williams: I was happy. It was like a dream. You were dreaming you were in something that you thought about before. What am I doing here? Is this me? In fact, when it was over and I came back, did that really happen? Did I really do that? That kind of stuff. I think most people feel that same way, especially because I came like you say--. One year I was nothing, the next year I was in this.

Morris: That's pretty fast.

Williams: That's the way to do it. [laughter]

Morris: Yes. You can't get too worried about it if you do it all in six months.

Williams: That's right. I didn't start thinking about the Olympics seriously until I started getting into these meets where you were working up from the local meets to the dual meets and then the regional meets of the NCAA, the Pacific Coast Conference, this kind of stuff. You are working up. In other words, the Olympics is at the end of it. Each time you compete, you say, "If I do good this time, maybe I've got a chance to get there."

Morris: It's kind of a stair step.

Williams: It's a stair step. That's it. In other words, I was saying, "I'm going to make the Olympics. There is this chance for it. It's possible." That's the way I thought about it. But say the year before that, no. I thought it was crazy to think that could happen. I admired and knew the history of the Olympics. I knew the history of all the guys who were doing it, say, in 1932. I knew all about the guys. Even the year before the Olympics, I knew who the best runners were at that time. I knew who they were. I said, "You'll have to beat this guy; you'll have to beat that guy."

Morris: Because you had already had some experience with them at regional meets.

Williams: That's right. I would read about them and things like that.

Morris: Did Brutus have some advice for you the day of your race?

Williams: Yes. He said, "Go in and do it. Just do it."

Morris: Cool. You can beat these guys. So you did it.

Williams: "Do it like you've always been doing it." You could make up a big yarn about what goes through your mind. What the hell. You're scared as hell. Let's get it on.

Morris: That's one thing about a 440. It's not like a marathon or something like that.

- Williams: It's over with just like that. It's a dash and you don't have time to think. Or you're trying not to just run out of gas. And you're trying not to get left behind. That was it.
- Morris: That's wonderful. What is it like to be up there on the platform?
- Williams: It's kind of weird. In other words, you've seen everybody else going through that. Here I am, that kind of stuff. What the hell. You see your name up on the board. Then they hand you the medal. Even the day afterwards I said, "Gee, whiz. Was that really me?" It was a great feeling.
- Morris: Who hands you the medal?
- Williams: It's sort of the head of the Olympics. I don't know. Some French guy. They wanted to kiss you. Get out of here. [laughter] They'd hand you the medal and the scroll. It was sort of like graduating.
- Morris: One of the stories says that they gave you a little tree.
- Williams: Yes. I tried to get the tree sent back, to plant it in Berkeley, but I had to give it up.
- Morris: Customs wouldn't let you bring it in?
- Williams: Customs. But when I got back, I asked about it. Nothing happened. A lot of guys, Mack Robinson (Jackie Robinson's brother), he planted his tree in his back yard. Mine is probably over there some place. I don't know what kind of tree it was.
- Morris: Some kind of evergreen.
- Williams: Evergreen or something. I don't know. A lot of guys had them.

Exhibition Tour; Press Coverage

- Morris: I think that's a great idea. They don't seem to do that any more. Then you went off on a tour.
- Williams: Oh, yes. After the Olympics, we went back to England. They had some kind of Commonwealth Games. This was an exhibition race. Then from London we went to Amsterdam, Rotterdam and some damn other "Dam" place. [laughter] Then we went to Norway and

Sweden. What the idea was, was making up these exhibition teams. This guy here, Carpenter. [points to photo] Ken Carpenter was on the team. Ralph Metcalfe, Speck [Forrest] Towns, Dave Albritton. Jesse [Owens] was supposed to go with us. But what happened was Eddie Cantor cabled Jesse and said, "Jesse, get back here quick. Hurry back. I've got you all set up for a tour of the night clubs." Or some kind of exhibitions.

Morris: Good heavens. How did he know a popular singer like Eddie Cantor?

Williams: Jesse would get phone calls and telegrams from all over from all kinds of people, wishing him luck, offering him deals. This one was from Eddie Cantor.

So Jesse said, "The heck with this tour."

Morris: He was going to go do a little night life.

Williams: Night-club stuff. Running against a horse or some stupid thing. He was exploited on that one, it was a staged race. That's what they used to do to athletes then. So we got there, the plane landed, and some guy said, "Where's Jesse Owens?" I said, "He ain't coming." "What do you mean? Do you see that sign, 'Welcome Jesse Owens?'" "He ain't coming." So he got in the plane, looked in the seats, went up in the cockpit looking for Jesse. He said, "Where is he?" "He ain't coming, I told you." "You're Jesse Owens." "No, I ain't." "Sign this." So I signed "Jesse Owens." [laughter]

So anyway, that's what happened on that tour. We went to Oslo; we went to Stockholm. To a whole bunch of those towns over there. They had exhibition meets; you would run against the local high school kids. It was just a kind of ceremony type thing. We stayed over there until, well, hell. The whole team came back right after the Olympics. We were over there for almost a month. When we got back, there was nobody at the boat to meet us, not even the deckhands. But it didn't matter.

Morris: The rest of the guys got a ticker-tape parade in New York.

Williams: I've got a picture of that. Ticker tape and they met the mayor. There was a lot of stuff like that.

Morris: [looks at picture] Oh, there they are.

Williams: That's Jimmy Brooks. He's from Chicago I think. That's Mack Robinson. That's me. That's Jimmy LuValle. That's Dave

Albritton; I talked to him the other night. Cornie [Cornelius] Johnson from Compton.

Morris: Nice looking bunch of fellows.

Williams: When I got back, then I had--.

Morris: Did they have a big fuss at Cal when you got back?

Williams: They took a picture or something.

##

Williams: I look like Fred Astaire. Anyway, in Oakland I got a ride in a fire engine, got the keys to the city from the mayor.

Morris: Oh, neat.

Williams: The usual stuff. Back at Cal, there was a picture there, when I got back to Cal.

Morris: They went out and took a picture of your aunt and your grandma.¹

Williams: Here's my mom. It's the Chronicle, I guess.

Morris: This is the Sporting Green. [Reads headline] "Mama knew it all the time."

Williams: Here's where they were carving our name on the old brick wall over there.

Morris: In Germany.²

Williams: Right.

Morris: That's wonderful.

Williams: [Shows another clipping] This was during all those--.

Morris: Okay. This is something I've been looking for. This is Delilah Beasley's column of "Activities among East Bay Negroes" in the Oakland Tribune. Tarea Pittman's oral history tells about how hard it was to get news coverage of Negro events.³

¹Oakland Tribune sports section, August 8, 1936.

²Ibid.

³Tarea Hall Pittman, NAACP Official and Civil Rights Worker, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, 1974.

Williams: You know Tarea. Did you know her?

Morris: I know of her. She was quite a lady.

Williams: She was a friend of hers. Her husband Bill used to be a dentist.

Morris: Did you go to him?

Williams: Oh, yes. I got a couple of fillings. I was stationed in Alaska; she came up and visited us once.

Morris: [Sees another photo] This is the picture that is in Sproul Hall.

Williams: This is the picture, right. Everybody used to laugh about that. I used to have a lousy start. I was a very poor starter, started out slow. They would point at that picture and say, "Look at you starting. Everybody else is gone but you're just barely getting started."

Morris: Where did you pick up your speed?

Williams: During the race. Well, it was like anything. The real race is to finish. In other words, if you get a good start--. In these short races, you wanted to get a good start. In this race, I didn't want to get left, so you tried to stay with the pack. You know how fast you're going here, here, here, here, and when you get around the final turn, that's when you put the speed on, like the guys in the race cars. You speed out of the turn and beat it to the finish line with that.

Morris: [Reads another clipping] Here you are in Greek.

Williams: Couldn't be right.

Morris: It certainly doesn't look right.

Williams: That's Finnish. That's a hard language. That's when I came back. Here's the Daily Cal.

Morris: You got a gold watch from William McCracken, mayor of Oakland. And there you are on top of somebody's car. You are sitting on the back of an open convertible.

Williams: There's one picture in here with Woody Leconte. Was this at Cal?

- Morris: No. This is the Examiner, Saturday, September 26. I think that's a parade. Isn't that wonderful.
- Williams: I had a parade. How do you like these kind of pictures. Look at that. [Shows cartoon]¹
- Morris: Oh, my goodness.
- Williams: Look at that. Stepin Fetchit.
- Morris: Isn't that too bad. He is running circles around--.
- Williams: Yes. But the idea of a bunch of little black Sambos. That was the mentality that they had in those days. In fact, it was like Hitler was saying, that we were a bunch of jungle bunnies. He was saying that we were a subhuman species. And every one of these goddamned guys finished college. You talk about Jimmy [LuValle]; he was a real intellectual. Some anthropologist there made a study of Jesse Owens, analyzed his physique, and they decided he was a Norwegian. He's got the perfect physique [laughter] for a Norwegian. They were trying to say that our bones were different and our skulls were that thick [demonstrates], we can't do long division.
- Morris: That must have been kind of hard to live with.
- Williams: It was a goddamned joke. When you hear that, it's funny.
- Morris: This looks somebody's effort to counteract that a little bit.
- Williams: I guess so.

¹San Francisco Chronicle Sporting Green, August 9, 1936. See appendix.

V EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AT CAL

Campus YMCA, Civilian Pilot Training Program, ROTC

- Morris: What do we have here in your scrapbook? This is Stiles Hall. Civil Rights.
- Williams: This is the YMCA.
- Morris: "What the Berkeley campus is saying about the University YMCA."
- Williams: Harry Kingman, he was the head of the Y. And Dyke Brown, he was the president I think.
- Morris: Here you are. Here's Archie Williams on the board, yes?
- Williams: It was nice. It was the only thing they had going at Cal as far as interracial stuff. I never felt real heavy pressure about race here but the only thing that I resented was what this counselor told me. For instance, they had these societies like the ASME, the mechanical engineering society. They had a student branch. I wasn't eligible for that. I felt that I was an engineering student, I should be entitled to it. I didn't care, but I was discouraged. I wanted to go into aeronautical engineering. In fact, I learned how to fly while I was--.
- Morris: At Cal?
- Williams: Yes, right. They had the student Civilian Pilot Training Program. It started in 1939, I guess it was. This was sort of a pre-war type thing. They were trying to get a corps of private pilots. I qualified.
- Morris: Just in case?
- Williams: In case, right. I was told that I wasn't eligible. The guy who said it, he wasn't the one to make up minds, but he said,

"You're not going to make it." But I asked Brutus and he went to bat for me to get into it.

Morris: Was this part of the ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps] program?

Williams: No, it was a federal program. Of course, ROTC the same way. I was in Army ROTC but it was a joke. We were just marching up and down in a field. But I couldn't get into Naval ROTC.

Morris: Well, Army ROTC. Those initials are "Reserve Officers Training Corps."

Williams: Yes, but that didn't mean anything.

Morris: You could march around in the uniform but you wouldn't get an officer's commission?

Williams: No. You won't get nothing. You would get a pair of Khaki pants and an old beat-up M-1 rifle. It was just training. ROTC was something you had to do.

Morris: It went with being a land-grant college.

Williams: That's right. So I signed up for it. In fact, I got a semester of it, but it was nothing. Most of the guys got a laugh. They would come out in black and white shoes on parade.

Morris: Were the navy guys running around in their blue suits?

Williams: Oh, yes. But there were no blacks--

Morris: Fellows in it.

Williams: Right. The army guys, they decided who was going to be in it. The ones on the campus.

Morris: Were there other black students in this pilot flying program?

Williams: Not when I was in it.

Social Life

Morris: There were a couple of black fraternities on campus. Did you join any of them?

Williams: I was an Alpha [Alpha Phi Alpha].

Morris: Was that a good bunch of fellows?

Williams: Actually, the chapter of the Alphas, the guys in there were graduate students. They were guys who had graduated from Cal. In fact, we didn't have a student chapter at that time. I was initiated by a bunch of guys: Bill Pittman (Tarea's husband), George Johnson--he was an assistant law professor in Boalt Hall--and some other guys. They were all Cal graduates. This was the graduate chapter.

Morris: But there weren't any undergraduate members?

Williams: Well, actually, myself and Harry and Ted Smith were initiated at the same time.

Morris: Harry Who?

Williams: Harry Osibin [spells it]. He's the guy I went to junior college with. He was the one who was going to be a dentist. Campus life in those days for blacks, well, you were just going to college. There weren't very many social--. It didn't matter to me. I was there to get my degree.

Morris: The guys on the track team didn't go out and go to the movies together?

Williams: No. There were a couple of those guys that we were friends with. But we would just drink a few beers together once in a while but we didn't have things like the white fraternities did. I knew a lot of guys in the frats. They would probably be glad to have me at their parties. They may have thought about it, but it didn't matter to me.

Morris: What about dates?

Williams: Well, we went out. There were black girls going to Cal. We could have dated with other girls, any girls.

Morris: Did the sororities have parties?

Williams: No.

Morris: There were two--.

Williams: There were the AKAs [Alpha Kappa Alphas]--.

Morris: And was it Delta Sigma Theta?

Williams: Vesta was AKA I think. I better not get that wrong. I forget. [Mrs. Williams was a Delta.] The other fraternity for the boys was the Kappas. There was the Phi Beta Sigmas. We called them boy scouts. Their pin looked like the Boy Scouts'. It was different then because, as I said, there weren't too many black kids going to college.

Morris: There were about twelve in the twenties. So if you recall thirty, that's moving up.

Williams: That's true. Oh, sure. You've heard of Walt Gordon?

Morris: Yes.

Williams: He was a judge. In fact, he was the first black policeman in Berkeley.

Morris: Yes. He was on the board of the YMCA.

Williams: Right. He also was a black football star.

When he was on the police force in Berkeley, he used to drive around in one of those big old touring cars--you know, with the side curtains? He was something to see! He really kept order; everyone knew who he was and no one messed with him.

When he went into law practice, his partner was George Johnson, also black, who taught at Boalt Hall. My father used to rent rooms up on our third floor to college students, and George Johnson stayed with us for a while when I was a kid. He would give us younger kids a whack on the rear if we got to be a nuisance when he was trying to study.

Let's see. Smoke [Bill] Francis was another guy. We were kind of freaks. I ran across Walt when I was in the air force in Japan back in the sixties, I guess.

Oakland Flying Service

Morris: So you got the training to fly?

Williams: To fly. Right. Flying training was conducted by a civilian outfit called the Oakland Flying Service. About the time I graduated (I graduated in 1939), this guy hired me to work for

him as a kind of flunky. We called them ramp rats, grease monkeys. To work on the airplanes.

Morris: Maintenance.

Williams: Maintenance, right. He let me fly the planes. In fact, he staked me to a lot of flying time. In other words, I told him I would pay him back later on when I would get hired as a pilot, as an instructor.

Morris: He sounds like a good fellow. Who was he?

Williams: Harry Sham. He's dead. Oakland Flying Service.

Morris: Didn't he help get the Oakland Airport put together?

Williams: Yes. He was on all kinds of boards and things. At that time, the Oakland Airport was really country flying. I think TWA landed there but there were a bunch of flying schools and flying outfits, and he had the flying school. I worked for him and put in my time and finally got my instructor's license. He couldn't hire me as an instructor because of the power structure in those days. I don't know who it was that said that he couldn't.

In fact, I had an instructor degree and had bootleg students who needed somebody to sign the logbooks. I went down to Alabama to Tuskegee Institute in 1943.

VI ARMY AIR CORPS FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR, 1941-1945

The Tuskegee Spookwaffe

Morris: Did you see World War II coming?

Williams: Yes. I was still talking about--. What I could have done is I could have gone to Canada. Some of the guys did.

Morris: There was not a color bar in Canada?

Williams: No. I knew some of the guys who went up there. I didn't know all about that but I knew these guys going to Canada. So I went to Tuskegee. They had started training black pilots.

Morris: The black flying program.

Williams: They called it the Spookwaffe.

Morris: [laughter] That's wonderful. I haven't heard that before. Most people refer to it in much more dignified terms.

Williams: That's what it was.

Morris: You taught the pilots in the Spookwaffe?

Williams: Exactly. Right. I went down there as a instructor. Tuskegee had a civilian program like Cal had. They had training facilities and pilots. Mrs. [Eleanor] Roosevelt went down there and saw that we were making it. She beat on the desk and got them to set up a training program for military pilots. So they initiated this.

Morris: So that the air corps came to Tuskegee and set up a program. That's how that pilot training program got started?

Williams: That's right. They had a civilian pilot program and then they set up a military program there equipped with five airplanes.

Some of the instructors down there were-- . They had two white instructors, and most of the supervisory personnel were white. CPT, they called it, Civilian Pilot Training Program. They used our little dinky field down there just for their primary training. They kept the airplanes there and flew over to Moton Field where they had enough room to land, to practice their landings and all. While I was there, I taught as a civilian instructor.

Morris: What kinds of planes were you--?

Williams: We had these little Cubs, but they had the Steerman biplanes for the primary. I was qualified. I took a check ride with the military, Colonel Smith, to teach the military pilots and I was qualified to do that, just teach them to take off and land, do snap rolls and moves and what not. Just flying. It was fun.

Bureaucratic Runaround: From Pilot to Weather Officer

Morris: You really liked flying.

Williams: Oh, I loved it. Then I applied for a commission while I was still down there and they, get this, sent me to the meteorology school at UCLA. In other words--.

Morris: You had to go back to square one.

Williams: I was too old to be a flying cadet, but I qualified to be a weather cadet. Tell me about the bureaucracy.

Morris: Was there a beef about signing you up as an officer?

Williams: They didn't sign me up as an officer. I had to go back to school.

Morris: In other words, you enlisted.

Williams: Enlisted, right. I signed up with the aviation cadets. I was twenty-seven, too old to be a flying cadet, so they sent me to UCLA to be a weather cadet.

Morris: Did anybody know you knew how to fly a plane?

Williams: Yes, they did. Sure. I was teaching them flying. The guy who signed me up for the weather cadet was some guy down at Maxwell Field. I signed up. They looked at my record. They said,

"You've got this qualification. You're qualified to be a meteorologist." I said, "Great, I'll take it." So they sent me to UCLA for a year. I got a commission there back to weather school. Here's the funny part. Guess where they sent me when I finished weather school?

Morris: Back to Tuskegee?

Williams: Right back to Tuskegee to be a weather officer. Once I was a weather officer about a year, they said, "Hey, you know how to fly? Come here. See that goddamn DC-13? Get in the back seat and check that other guy out." Made me an instructor. So that put me back--.

Morris: Back to being an instructor.

Williams: With the lieutenant bars. I was a lieutenant then.

Morris: All right. This is still the army air corps.

Williams: Army air corps, right. While I was there, I had three jobs. I was a weather officer. I was drawing weather maps, making weather forecasts, and teaching intro to flying.

Morris: Good heavens.

Williams: We would get up in the morning. Since you had training and weather, you would jump in that plane and check the weather. I used to go up and fly around and see how the weather was, call back and say, "It's okay to fly." [laughter] A couple of times we got up there and had to fly away to Birmingham; the weather was so bad we had to spend the night in Birmingham. But it was fun. It was great because I was doing what I liked to do.

Morris: How many fellows were in that Tuskegee air corps unit by that time?

Williams: You mean, how many trainees?

Morris: Yes.

Williams: They were training about twenty at a time. The first class only had five guys: B.O. [Benjamin] Davis, who ended up as a lieutenant general and was the CO [commanding officer]; [Lemuel] Custis--who were the other guys? Spanky Roberts.

Morris: Spanky?

- Williams: We all had nicknames. He's dead now. He was in the first class. Mack Ross. And Jimmy Moore, he finally washed out. First they had one class and they put them through.
- Morris: This is what, 1942?
- Williams: 1942, right. Then the second class came in. They would bring them in--it was just like the cadets. They had them doing pushups and running around the field, getting physically in shape. They had five instructors.
- Morris: That's pretty good, five instructors and five trainees.
- Williams: That's the first class. Then they still only had five instructors and a bunch more trainees. Three of the pilots were black. Four of them were black. Steve Allen, and then they had one guy. What the hell was his name? Shelton. He reminded me of Andy Griffith. He sounded like him. "All right, you guys. Get in that there plane over there." He was a real Southern boy. He was from Tuskegee. It was funny.
- Morris: Did they send some Asians, Hispanics or white guys in there?
- Williams: No. This was training the black pilots. The word was, "Let's give these coons these airplanes, let them go out and kill themselves." They figured we were going to screw up. But anyway, there was no problem. The pilots were good pilots.
- Morris: No reason they shouldn't be.
- Williams: These guys were real good. Then they started recruiting the black instructors. I had one guy from Pittsburgh. Where were the other guys from?
- Morris: People like yourself who had learned how to fly before they were in the military?
- Williams: Yes, that's right. The only place we could get jobs as black instructors was Tuskegee. We were getting two hundred dollars a month. That ain't much money. We went around to the other fields. We knew some of these other white guys we had gone to college with, they were teaching flying in some of the other schools. They were making \$400 at least, maybe \$400 or \$500. The guy who was running the program, a civilian guy, G.L. Washington, he was the Simon Legree of the air corps, he found out that we were trying to find out how much these other guys were getting, so to keep us quiet, he said, "If any of you guys get any ideas of quitting us, we've got your draft board

telephone number, and the first thing that will happen is that you are going to get a phone call from your draft board--."

Morris: This is while you are still a civilian.

Williams: Right, right. That was their threat.

Morris: "Greetings," from your draft board.

Williams: Right. Some of the other guys signed up to get a direct commission, but we couldn't do it. Have you heard of General Chappie James? He was a general. He died recently. He was the only black guy who made four star general. Chappie was a flying general, a really good pilot. Chappie and I were good friends and Vesta and I stood up with them when they got married.

Morris: Did you train him?

Williams: I was an instructor. I checked him out in some of the airplanes.

Morris: Didn't the pilots go into combat as a unit?

Williams: Sure. The 99th. That's what they called us. The Fighting 99th.

Morris: Was that a tussle?

Williams: No, no. What it was, once we started putting out pilots and they got enough of them together, say ten or twenty of them, they sent them up to Selfridge. They called it RTU, Replacement Training Unit, where they got their combat training in other words. We taught them how to fly the plane and do the maneuvers and all but they got their combat training at Selfridge Field and these satellite fields in Oscota, Michigan, where they sent them, Waterboro and some places.

Morris: Selfridge is where?

Williams: Detroit.

Morris: Were they in combat training with white pilots?

Williams: They were in training, right. That's right. They were made up as a squadron at that time. They had P-40s.

Tuskegee Airmen Overseas: Black Cadets at West Point

- Morris: Did they go into combat as individual replacement pilots?
- Williams: No, as a unit. They sent them to North Africa, the 99th. And I didn't go with them.
- Morris: That's the trouble with being an instructor. You don't usually get to go into combat. But you get to be an old pilot that way.
- Williams: Too old.
- Morris: An older pilot. Sorry.
- Williams: Right. They were turning them out pretty fast, after the 99th. Then they had a bunch of pilots. When they got a bunch of them, they formed what they called the 332nd.
- Morris: What does that do?
- Williams: Fighter group. They formed that, and they sent them overseas to North Africa. They sent them to Sicily and Italy. They had four squadrons: 301st, 302nd, the 100th, and then they assigned the 99th to the 332nd. It was on one of the squadrons. So they had four squadrons. That's when they got going good. They started shooting down planes. C. Buster Hall, he got the first German. His name was Charlie Hall, but his nickname was C. Buster.
- Morris: So they flew all the way through the campaigns against Germany?
- Williams: Once they got into Italy, they all were in Italy, in Naples, places like that. They shot down I don't know how many. It's in the book how many victories they had and so forth.
- Morris: Would that mean that by the time you got to be a whole fighter group, there were other black officers besides pilots?
- Williams: Oh, sure. The 332nd was all black. B.O. Davis was the colonel. He got his training as an officer. He was a captain. In fact, when I was down there, he was a captain, the next week he was a major, the next week he was a lieutenant colonel.

##

- Morris: Are you good for another half an hour?
- Williams: Yes, I'm full of B.S.

Morris: These are wonderful stories. When did the first black fellow go to West Point? Not in World War II?

Williams: Actually, before then, there were some. B.O. was the only one that I met, that I knew. He got the silent treatment there. In other words, he went through the whole four years there and nobody spoke to him. He got the real treatment that they give to anybody they want to be hard on. Just because he was black, they didn't want him to make it.

Morris: But he stuck it out.

Williams: Sure, he did.

Morris: And he stuck it out through his career.

Williams: Damn right. We're proud of him.

Morris: I should say.

Williams: Of course, there were people who didn't like him in the squadron because he was a real man. In other words, he laid the law down.

Morris: Some of that West Point stuff might have rubbed off on him.

Williams: Sure. His father was one of the first black generals. His father was a general who worked his way up in the ranks. In fact, B.O. said when he ate supper with his dad, he had to sit at attention, eat a square meal. That kind of stuff. His father was a real general, that type of guy, so it rubbed off on him. He wasn't one of these slap on the back type of guys. You better not. He would kick your ass out the door. He was a good guy, a straight arrow.

Morris: Do you think the accomplishments of these fighter pilots made a difference in the general attitude toward black people?

Williams: Damn right it did. Sure it did. Because a lot of guys there were bigoted. The white guys didn't want to fly with them and all, but they found out that these guys could fight, could shoot good and protect the bombers. That was the main thing. That was what their job was, flying top cover for the bombers. Most of the assignments that they got before that were ground support, shooting at trucks, shooting at soldiers running down the road, things like that. In other words, they weren't given a real job. In fact they were criticized a lot, badmouthed,

because they were never given an assignment where they actually had to show what they could do.

Morris: What changed that?

Williams: The fact that they assigned them some missions where they had to do something. Shoot at the Germans.

Morris: Make sure the bombers got to their targets?

Williams: Right. Protect them to do things. People realized they could cut it. There was a lot of bad publicity given to them for no reason, just because the guys didn't want them to make it.

VII POSTWAR CAREER IN THE U.S. AIR FORCE

Morris: Did a lot of those guys who trained at Tuskegee stay in the air force and make it their career?

Williams: Oh, yes. Sure. Chappie became a general. Spanky was a general. There were a lot of generals. They have a thing called the Tuskegee Airmen which was supposed to honor these guys, but to me it got to be something that has been misused for publicity purposes things, you know. They would have a get-together and make it something sort of a publicity stunt.

Most of the guys--. In fact, in my case, after the war we were stationed at Columbus, Ohio. I put in for school training at the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright Field. I was sent there as a student. That's when, in 1948, they integrated the air force. Truman said, "No more of this segregation B.S."

Morris: How did that go?

Williams: It went over great.

Morris: Did it?

Williams: Sure. While I was flying, I would land at bases, fields, run my plane and go in. They said, "This is the black restroom, the black mess hall." In other words, they still had segregation in 1948, 1947. They didn't want you to participate in anything. If you were an officer, you were an officer. They didn't want you to go to this officer club and stuff like that. They tried to court-martial the whole squadron up at some place in Indiana, Dan Quayle's home town.

Morris: For what? Marching into the officer's club?

Williams: Right. These guys had B-25s and they landed at the field. The base commander said, "You guys, you stay in this area. You've got your own officers' club. You stay there." Some of the guys said, "Hell, I wonder what their officers club is like? Let's

go up and try it out." So he put out an order to court-marshal the whole squadron. That's like arresting the whole town. They laughed him out--.

Morris: It didn't stick, did it?

Williams: Hell, no. They made a joke out of it. He submitted it but they laughed at him. That was about the time they said, "We're going to integrate the air force."

Morris: Times have changed.

Williams: I'll show you my book here. [leaves room to find book] --the name of that book.

Morris: The 1950 Integrator.

Williams: But it had nothing to do with racial integration. It was the name of the book. It's about this school that I went to, the Air Force Institute of Technology. Hoyt Vandenberg, air commander.

Morris: Is he the one that Vandenberg Air Force Base is named after?

Williams: That's right. You know who he looks like? Pat Sajak, doesn't he?

Morris: He does. Very handsome fellow. It's those uniforms. That will do it every time.

Williams: Let's see. I was meteorological officer of their weather center. I had a real good job doing weather forecasting, working for the Fifth Air Force in the air force headquarters. Then when I left there, I came back to the 26th Air Division, stationed in New York. It has control of all the air defense on the East Coast. It's a command post; I worked in there. I did the weather for the fighters and the staff.

From there, I went up to Alaska.

Morris: You really travelled a lot then.

Williams: I had a detachment up there, assigned to an air force base.

Morris: Did the wife and kids get to go with you?

Williams: Sure.

Morris: That's pretty nice. I see a citation from the California State Senate. What have you been up to?

Williams: That was put together by Milton Marks or somebody. When the winter is coming up there when things are quiet, they resurrect us old guys. It's something to do "Resolved, on behalf of the Olympics community..."

Morris: Great. Is that this year?

Mrs. Williams: Four years ago.

Williams: Fours years ago. With the Olympics coming up, I'll start getting mentions again.

Morris: That's nice. Congressional Recognition for Meritorious Achievement. That's pretty nice.

Williams: I got a letter from Dan Quayle yesterday.

Morris: Asking for money?

Williams: Yes. They call them--. I'll show it to you. It's a bunch of crap. They've got something called the inner circle, the Republican inner circle.

Morris: Don't you get fundraising letters from Cal?

Williams: I don't know. Anyway, it says that you can meet all the dignitaries. Robert Dole, too. These guys really think I've got it made. You can have a good seat at the inauguration. You get to sit next to Willie Horton and Judge [Clarence] Thomas. [laughter]

Morris: Oh dear.

Williams: The hell with them. Anyway, they're kind of scared now. I always get this fundraising stuff from the Republican leadership. Jesus. That's a bunch of our tax money, making these fancy cards. The military, they've got Colin Powell, a lot of generals. You've seen the general down there in Guantánamo Bay sending those Haitians back. Goddamn. That's terrible. They're only sending them back because they're black. We trained some black pilots down at Tuskegee from Haiti, two or three.

Mrs. Williams: I remember that.

Williams: They were looking for flight training and they were black. The only place you could send black people was to Tuskegee.

Morris: Is there still a training program in Tuskegee?

Williams: Oh, no. It's all gone. The school is still there. The school itself has become a real university. A long time ago, it was just an ag [agriculture] school. They taught courses like mule shoeing, cow milking. Booker T. [Washington], he taught there; he was teaching black people to be good servants. That was the purpose of Tuskegee. Of course, when they started talking this flying stuff, that was crazy. They said that the jump from the plow to the plane is too much for these coons, this kind of stuff. We were supposed to fail; they expected us to fail.

Morris: But then, five years later, when you get Harry Truman as president, things have turned around.

Williams: Truman was our main man. He was the one who integrated the military. Right now. The main thing, they found out that it doesn't make sense. They were losing money. You've got some people who can do something, they've got a skill that you need. We can do long division and tie our shoes, stuff like this.

VIII TEACHING IN MARIN COUNTY, 1965-1987

- Morris: How did you happen to come back and settle in Marin County when you finished your hitch in the air force?
- Williams: I ended up in Strategic Air Command down at March Air Force Base in Riverside.
- Morris: Really? That's pretty fancy stuff.
- Williams: A bunch of Rock Hudson stuff. [laughter] Anyway, I had almost twenty-two years in; I said it was time to retire. I started thinking about what I could do. I enjoy teaching so I came up here. No. First, I checked out what it took to get a teaching credential. So I was right there in Riverside and we had U.C. Riverside. I got all the stuff that you need to get a credential, all the education courses. I had my degree and all.
- Morris: You had been teaching all these years.
- Williams: That's right. So I went and checked to see what I needed. I needed to learn how to run a slide projector.
- Morris: And do bulletin boards [laughter].
- Williams: Tests and measurements. All these ed courses. I went ahead and signed up at U.C. Riverside and took the courses, even though I was still in the service.
- Morris: Good for you. That's really putting your shoulder to the wheel.
- Williams: No, it was easy. One of the bottlenecks that I ran into really ticked me off. I took some extension courses. These courses are designed to get a credential. I took extension courses and then I went to UCR. The University of California Education Department said these courses don't count. Wait a minute. Upstairs in the same building was the extension division where I had signed up for the course. I had to go through that hassle. That's when I came up and asked Brutus, "Hey, Brutus, give me a

hand here." He told me somebody to go to see over in the School of Education. It was a simple course like tests and measurements or something; it's a prerequisite that you have to have on your record. It's not a heavy education course because I had a degree in engineering and enough math and science and physics and stuff to qualify to teach math or to teach science.

Morris: I would think, yes.

Williams: Anyway, I got my credential. I like it up here. I like living up this way. I came up to see my brother who was living in Hayward. I was asking about where I could work. He said, "What about over there in Marin County? Do you remember Chet Carlisle?" He used to be a basketball player for Cal, a good player. He was a superintendent over here. I came over to see him. "Hey, Ted, how are you doing." "Fine. Do you want a job?" I said, "Yes." "Okay. Keep in touch." Just like that.

Morris: That's neat.

Williams: That was back around Easter--.

Morris: They must have been delighted to have a fellow with your background in the public schools.

Williams: We used to train together. He was a basketball player and a really good friend. He said, "Okay, I've got you a job." He told me he could get me teaching math at Drake High School right down the street here. That was it. I got the job.

Morris: That's wonderful.

Williams: So he hired me. He came down and interviewed me. They were hiring teachers back in those days, back in 1965. They were hiring teachers so I got a job, just like that. So here I am.

Morris: What was it like teaching high school kids after teaching pilots?

Williams: Oh, beautiful. It was easy. I loved it. In fact, I taught for twenty-two years. I've retired out of there.

Morris: Did you do any coaching?

Williams: Well, yes. I helped out with track. I wasn't another Brutus. I was just a guy to help the kids.

Mrs. Williams: Don't forget the golf team.

Williams: Oh, yes. I coached golf too.

Morris: Really?

Williams: I won the coaches' tournament one time up in Rohnert Park. I inherited that. The golf coach quit or got sick or something. "Who wants to coach golf?" I said, "I'll do it." So I took it.

Morris: In working with kids, did you find that black kids have raised their sights some?

Williams: We don't have any over here. Well, in every class there are maybe three or four black kids here. I don't know. I just knew them as kids; they're friends. I knew their parents and all. Actually, what I tried to do. One time. It didn't work. Tam [Tamalpais] High School down here in Mill Valley--that's right near Marin City--most of the black kids go to Tam. I tried to get transferred to Tam. We had a program going down there in Marin City. We called it Project Breakthrough. One fellow who was on the district board; he set the project up. In Marin City we had evening classes. I worked with the kids there and got to know the bright kids. In fact, I still know a lot of them. I told the superintendent I would like to be transferred to Tam.

Morris: Is this the same school district?

Williams: The same district. Tam and Drake and Redwood. Of course, the principal at Drake said, "We need you here." This kind of stuff. You're doing a good job and all this stuff. At that time, he would have been short of teachers so I said, "We can't do it now. Later on." We would think about doing it later. He got transferred. Remember Lawrence, Mom? [Addressing wife.]

Mrs. Williams: Yes.

Williams: So I never brought it up again. I kind of wanted to do that because they had problems down there. You probably may realize it. Marin City is an enclave. It's kind of a benign ghetto, right down there right next to Sausalito. It overlooks it. These kids are sitting there looking at yachts and things like that.

Morris: Right. It's right there where you turn off the freeway going south.

Williams: That's right. That's true. I wanted to go down there and work. I still go down there and talk to the kids. I felt I could do some good. But it was one of those things and I didn't make a big issue out of it. I was still learning myself.

I got into computers. In fact, you saw a computer sitting over there. One of the old ones that they didn't want anymore so I got it in my house there.

Morris: You've really kept up with the math and technology field.

Williams: I've got to stay alive.

Mrs. Williams: Did you show her the yearbook?

Morris: The one from the Institute?

Mrs. Williams: No. The yearbook from the high school. They honored him the year before he retired.

Morris: [Looking at yearbook] Here you are. Aviation cadet in 1943.

Williams: Look at this stupid thing. At the fitness center then.

Morris: That's a great shot.

Williams: The guys who sell these fitness machines asked me if they could take my picture.

Morris: This is the fitness center you were talking about where you work out.

Williams: At the Jewish Community Center, right.

Morris: Here's a great photo. You retired as a major. That's pretty good.

Mrs. Williams: A lieutenant colonel when he retired.

Williams: When you retire, they always bump you. I was a lieutenant colonel in the reserves, but in the active duty rank they keep a different set of books. When you retire, you retire at the highest rank held. It don't mean anything.

Mrs. Williams: This particular year they dedicated the Drake High School yearbook to Archie.

Morris: They've got the nice photographs. Here he is in his flying cap. That's quite an honor from high schools students who are notably tough on the older generation.

Williams: I got along with them pretty well.

Morris: Any tips for the younger generation? What you would tell them?

Williams: Take long steps and save your shoe leather. [Laughter]
Something like that. No. Actually, this: do the best you can.

Morris: Have you stayed in touch with Cal? Are you active with any of the alumni stuff?

Williams: No, not too much because I'm--.

Mrs. Williams: They honored him.

Williams: They had a sort of Hall of Fame induction back a few years ago. Up in the stadium, they have a room up there. They had a whole kind of a lunch. They had something down at--. What was it, Holiday Inn?

Mrs. Williams: I think you were with the first group to go into the Hall of Fame.

Williams: I go over there once in a while, but I don't know anybody.

Morris: That's too bad.

Williams: It's not too bad. That's life.

TAPE GUIDE--Archie F. Williams

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BERLIN MAKES OWENS HERO

By HENRY McLEMORE
United Press Staff Correspondent
BERLIN, Aug. 8.—(UP)—The 1936 Olympic track and field championships were one week old today, and the sullen hostility which threatened to develop toward America on the opening day is dead.

This hostility, first felt when the American team swung through the gate for the opening celebration—to be greeted by half-hearted applause—shriveled to nothing during the week under the magnificence of the team's performance. Today the star-spangled brigade is on top in the point standing and running Germany's athletes a close second in popular esteem.

As this is written, Jesse Owens, Ohio State's triple-winning Negro, jogs around the track warming up, and his every stride is punctuated with banging applause. As he passes each block of seats, he is saluted with thunderclaps of noise. The super-runner from America's midwest has, temporarily at least, shattered teutonic aversion to non-nordics.

OWENS' GAME STAR

From the time the crowd first saw him run last Sunday in the 100 meters until today when he rocketed again in the relay, Owens has been the most popular figure in the games. His every move on the huge field is hailed with applause. His pictures and caricatures have dominated the newspapers, and in the theaters, newsreel shots of him in action drew louder and longer outbursts than even the German gold medalists.

The crowd, which believed Owens had ended his competition with the 200 meters Thursday, greeted today's announcement that he would run in

(Cont. on 2d Sport Page, Col. 3.)

OWENS' SPEED TIES RELAY RECORD

Americans Capture 1600 Race Trial In Olympics

By STUART CAMERON
United Press Sports Editor
OLYMPIC STADIUM, BER-
LIN, Aug. 8.—Glenn Morris, 24-
year-old automobile salesman
from Fort Collins, Colo., today

was crowned the world's great-
est all-round athlete when he
smashed all records in win-
ning the Olympic decathlon on the
next to the last day of track and
field competition.

Twenty thousand persons, in-
cluding Adolf Hitler, joined in a
deafening ovation for the rangy
Colorado youth as he crossed the
finish line in the 1500-meter run,
last event of a two-day, 10 event
program, with a total of 7900
points, a new world and Olympic
record.

With Morris showing the way, the
United States made its second clean
sweep of the Olympics by placing
one-two-three in the decathlon.

U. S. LEADS NATION WITH 188 POINTS; WOMEN SCORE 44

BERLIN, Aug. 8.—(UP)—Unof-
ficial Olympic track and field
point score after today's com-
petition follows:

SCORES—MEN

United States 188; Finland 75 1/2;
Germany 61 1/2; Japan 37 13-32;
Great Britain 28 1-11; Canada
17 1-11; Sweden 16 1-11; Italy
15 13-22; Holland 11; New Zea-
land 10; Switzerland 9; Poland
5; Norway 5; Australia 4; Philip-
pines 4; Latvia 4; Czechoslovakia
3 1-11; Brazil 2; Greece 2; Argen-
tina 1; Austria 2-11; Hungary
2-11.

SCORES—WOMEN

Germany 44; Poland 14; Italy
13; United States 12; Japan 7;
Canada 4; Austria 3; Holland 2;
Sweden 1.

Robert Clark, 23-year-old California
husky, finished second with 7601
points, also breaking the former
Olympic record. Jack Parker, 21-
year-old Sacramento, Calif., collegi-
an, was third with 7275 points.

Morris' victory gave the United
States its 11th championship in 20
events, equalling the bumper har-
vest of Los Angeles, and setting the
stage for Uncle Sam's greatest team
to tie the record of 13 titles scored
by America at Stockholm in 1912.

Three events remain on the
men's track and field program,
and the United States is favored
to win two of them, the 400 and
1600 meter relays. The other, the
marathon, is expected to be a
battle between Juan Zabala, Ar-
gentinas defending champion, and
the Japanese.

Oakland Tribune
August 8, 1936

ARCHIE GIVES FAMILY THRILL

By JACK JERNEGAN

When Archie Williams swept to the world's championship in the 400-meter run at the Olympic Games yesterday in Berlin, it wasn't the scores of thousands of spectators jamming the stadium that got the greatest thrill out of his great performance. That thrill was felt right here in Oakland. Archie's home city, where his 75-year-old grandmother, Mrs. Fannie Wall, has had her ear glued to the radio ever since the Games began.

With Mrs. Wall was her daughter, Archie's aunt, Mrs. Florence Murray, at whose residence at 6114 Telegraph Avenue, the great University of California athlete makes his home. And over in San Francisco Mrs. Lillian Williams, his mother, likewise was straining her ears for the first flash of victory.

For these three it was the crowning moment of their lives to hear that Archie had achieved his championship goal, and they did not hesitate to say so.

PRAYED FOR VICTORY

"If he knew how happy I am here, he certainly would be happy there in Berlin," said Mrs. Wall. "I've waited and prayed for this all year. This is the greatest moment we've ever had."

"The only thing to say is that we are thrilled," said Mrs. Murray, and Mrs. Williams echoed: "Thrilled? I certainly was. Oh, it was marvelous."

His grandmother, founder of the Fannie Hill Home for Negro children, is Archie's most enthusiastic rooter. She has watched him in every meet he has run in around the bay, besides following the reports closely when he is away.

When he spoke over the radio after the race, Archie's first words was for her:

"I want to say hello to grandma." He knew she would be listening in, although his mother, who is employed in San Francisco, might not be able to do so.

PLEA FOR MATE

Next he thought of his stricken teammate and one-time rival, Harold Smallwood of U. S. C., who was operated on for appendicitis this morning.

"I hope friends in California will write some words of cheer to Hal Smallwood, who had an appendicitis attack this morning and missed the race after qualifying yesterday. He's quite all right, but I know he'd like to get some letters."

All of his family here were so excited they could hardly sit still. None of them, except Mrs. Wall, had really realized how good their boy is until recently, but they were pulling for him.

"We hoped Archie would win," his aunt said. "He had planned it all along, ever since he went out to the university. He really went out to win. But Archie doesn't run for glory, he runs for the fun of it."

The family joined in a cablegram (they've been sending cablegrams pretty often lately) to congratulate the victor:

"Congratulations from your family," it said. "Enjoy your entire trip."

Archie won't be back from Europe until about the first of October, he wrote his mother in his last letter from Berlin. After the Olympics are over he will join other American stars in a series of exhibition meets in England, France and Sweden.

San Francisco Chronicle Sporting Breen
EDITED BY HARRY B. SMITH and BILL LEISER

HARRY B. SMITH and BILL LEISER

(As Cartoonist Argens sees it).

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SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., SUNDAY, AUGUST 9, 1936

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March 1992

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